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# The African COMMUNIST

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# South Africa after the elections

# A LUTA CONTINUA

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# The African Communist

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# A luta Continua

This issue of *The African Communist* focuses on analyses of the immediate post-election situation in South Africa. In the first place, what is it that has happened? Liberation? A sell-out? Or the first beginnings of a complex and long process of democratisation?

To some these questions may seem academic. But unless we understand the situation with some accuracy, our political strategies for the coming months and years are going to be badly misdirected.

There are some tendencies in our broad movement, as is noted by the Central Committee Discussion Document ("The Present Political Situation"), to present the April elections and the May inauguration of President Mandela as the culminating moment of our liberation struggle. We certainly should not underrate the significance of these moments. But speaking too easily of "liberation" can only serve to demobilise our main, mass-based forces.

On the other hand, the fact that a long struggle still lies ahead is not a reason to indulge in a demoralised (but seemingly "left") rejection of real advances that have been made these past months. But this, too, is a tendency that is around in our country.

Our class opponents have failed to defeat us. They have now been forced back into working within our Reconstruction and Development Programme (the RDP). But they are doing so with their own agenda — to dilute, to subvert and generally to frustrate our attempts to empower the majority of South Africans. "Privatise to pay for the RDP", is Anglo American chairman Julian Ogilvie Thompson's unsolicited advice. "Marry the NP's Normative Economic Model and the RDP", says Reserve Bank Governor, Chris Stals. What all of this amounts to is their famous "win-win" formula — we get the name (RDP), they get the content. Patrick Bond ("The RDP — a site for socialist struggle") addresses the challenges facing socialists on the RDP front.

Let us be neither smug about our achievements, nor demoralised by the fact that complex struggles lie ahead. Indeed, the new institutions at national and provincial level (see Nzimande's subtle analysis of the Natal situation), and even our own programme, the RDP, are real sites of struggle.

This is why the key slogan of the present moment must be quite simply:

A luta continua! ★

# Missing Keys?

At the beginning of July, Finance Minster Derek Keys suddenly resigned, citing personal reasons. He was replaced by Chris Liebenberg, former head of the banking giant, Nedcor.

There are some worrying features in these developments. But we don't refer to the usual problems cited by the commercial media: "the nervousness of the financial markets" (!!), and such like. *The African Communist* has very different concerns.

In the first place, we were never entirely happy to see a former captain of industry, and De Klerk's own minister, being given the critical finance portfolio. His sudden, and apparently whimsical resignation, confirms part of our original unhappiness. If Keys is the great patriotic figure many want us to believe, then why has he stepped aside at the very moment when we are just beginning to implement the Reconstruction and Development Programme?

Keys' replacement by another big business technocrat must surely evoke the same concerns. Keys was, at least, a lukewarm National Party MP. Liebenberg has been plucked out of retirement and unconstitutionally installed as minister. He is operating under no political discipline, other than that of the cabinet. Is there any reason to believe that, perhaps in a few months, he too won't become bored with the RDP and return to playing golf and the stock-market?

But our concerns are more deep-seated than this. Why is there the assumption that the Ministry of Finance is somehow the property of big business? Heavens knows they own enough of the economy as it is. No doubt, any Finance Minister will have to liaise with business, and indeed with the widest range of economic and social players in our country. But the post of Finance Minister isn't there to placate business. The portfolio is a critical one, it is absolutely central to the whole RDP. It requires an individual deeply committed to the social programme of the government of national unity.

In the hours and days following Keys' sudden resignation, we were all treated to a barrage of hysteria about "nervous markets", and a "plunging financial rand". We were given sermons about how our "economy could not afford too many of these shocks".

It is important that we immediately expose these supposedly impersonal "market" forces. In the first place, despite the hysteria, it was only the short term money markets that reacted to the news of Keys' resignation, much of it the result, it seems of "insider trading", by individuals who had advance warning of




the resignation. These markets are constantly moving up and down, and one of the main reasons for this is simply that speculators make millions of rands out of these dramatic fluctuations. The smartest operators, usually the powerful ones, profit from both the rises and the falls.

Beyond pure speculative gambling, the other reasons for the plunge on the short-term money markets following Keys' resignation were even less noble. The "market" is not some impersonal natural system, like the weather or the tides. The market reflects the prejudices of the major investors. Needless to say, here in South Africa those prejudices are thoroughly anti-worker and racist.

We cannot go on and on appointing the likes of Keys and Liebenberg in the hope of appeasing that voracious idol called "the market". Perhaps we need to win the collaboration of the business sector as much as possible, through plain talk, through a superior plan, through pressure and struggle. But, above all, we need to press ahead with the RDP, confident of our own resources and our own capacities. ★

# The present political situation

## *A central committee discussion document*

On June 18, the SACP Central Committee held its first plenary meeting since the April elections. Among items on the agenda was a political assessment of the new situation. A discussion paper was presented and fully discussed. The following document is the original paper as amended by the collective discussion.

### Introduction – *Mayibuye's* approach

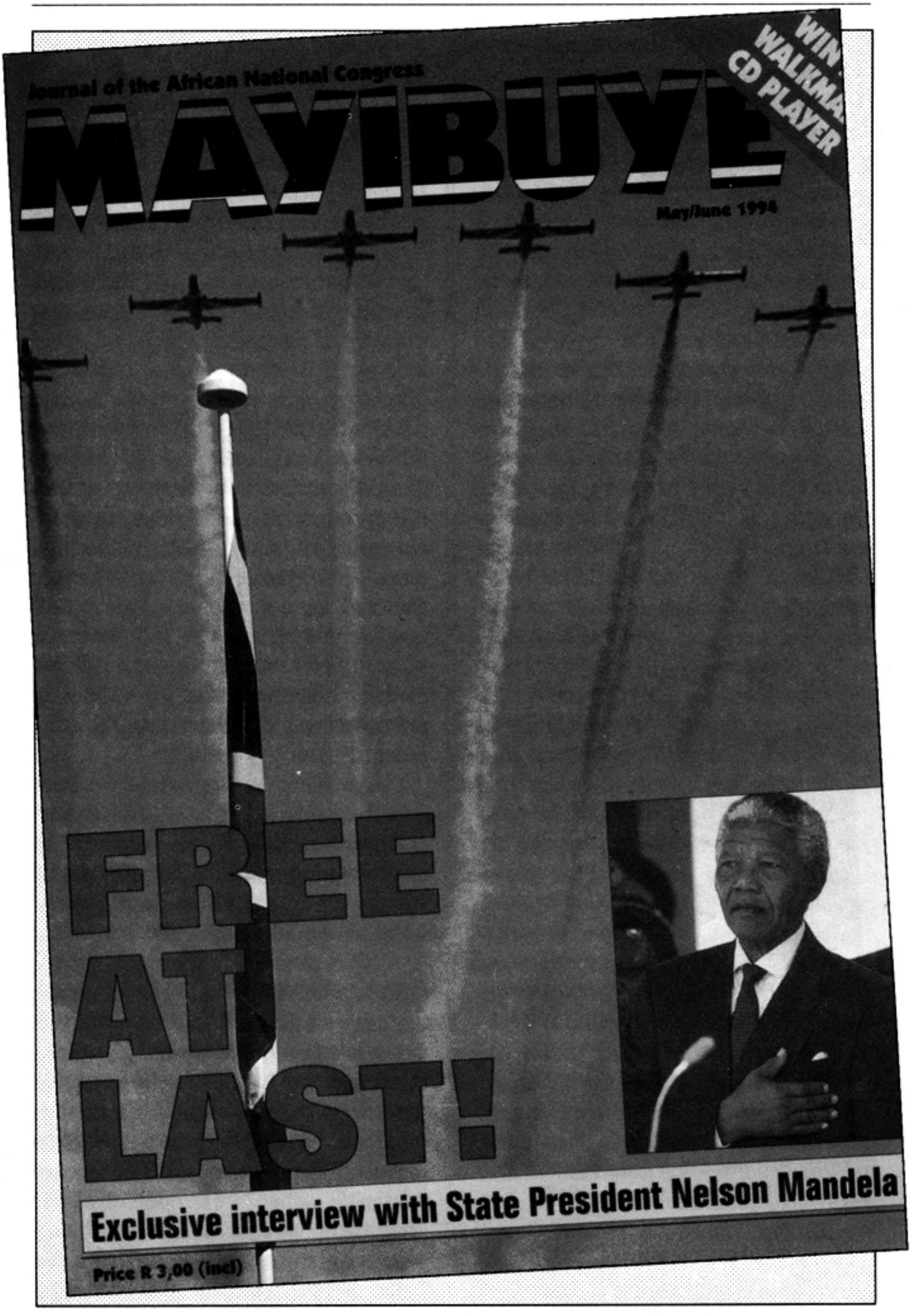
Our ANC-led liberation movement has just emerged from a major election victory, celebrated world-wide. Yet despite, or rather partly because of our major breakthrough there is, at present, considerable strategic confusion throughout the ANC-aligned movement, including within our own party. We believe that the SACP, as in the recent past, now has a very important duty to help develop a clearer strategic perspective for our whole movement. That there is a crying need for such a contribution is underlined by, for instance, the most recent *Mayibuye*, the official monthly journal of the ANC.

In the spirit of comradely criticism, we believe that it is a useful starting point to consider, in some detail, the editorial of the May/June 1994 issue of *Mayibuye*. The issue, with a cover of Impala jets flying over the Union Buildings and a slogan "FREE AT LAST!", devotes itself to celebrating and analysing the situation in South Africa after the elections of April. The editorial sets about its analysis as follows:

I. *"The moment has arrived. Liberation. Real change. National Democratic Revolution. Call it what you may.*

*"It is the moment that flashed through the minds of many a hero as they succumbed to the assassin's bullet, the hangman's noose and the torturer's fatal blow...*

*"It was slow in coming. From the*


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*forbearers' welcoming embrace many centuries ago which was returned with a suffocating grip. And the modest beginnings of mass action, armed struggle and underground work. To the wrangles in negotiating chambers and Third Force violence. And, at the apex, the attempted sabotage of the electoral process...*

II. *"Yet we dare not forget in the din of the cry of success and the soothing words of reconciliation: the march has been long and difficult; but we have only reached a milestone. Important in its significance, imposing in its frame and high up the steep — but only a milestone all the same. The real battle, beyond pomp and ceremony and the symbolism of a new flag and anthem, has just begun.*

*"Now, ordinary people will rejoice only at the sight of the foundation of the first of the million houses that have to be built over the next five years...Now is the time to make good the election pledge. In this regard, the words of a writer on the French Revolution are instructive: 'Patiently endured so long as it seemed beyond redress, a grievance comes to appear intolerable once the possibility of removing it crosses men's minds'.*

*"In June, allocations from the budget will be decided upon. A modest beginning can then be made. Commitment of the multi-party cabinet and civil service to reconstruction and development is crucial.*

III. *"But, above all, the ANC must rely on the basic source of strength that has brought us to where we are: confidence in the people and accountability to them.*

IV. *"This and only this will give meaning to the moment's outpouring of emotion. The deserved victory will be worth its salt because it will be able to defend and advance itself."*

This is an editorial that reveals considerable uncertainty, and some hedging of bets. There are four distinct "gear-changes" which we have labelled I, II, III and IV.

**GEAR-CHANGE I** – In line with the FREE AT LAST! cover of the edition, the present moment is portrayed as the culmination of decades, even of centuries of struggle. It is *the* moment". It is: "Liberation. Real change. National Democratic Revolution. Call it what you may." The last sentence starts to give the game away — the truth is, the *Mayibuye* editorialist is not sure *how* to characterise the conjuncture.

However, having done its best (with much rhetorical hype and pomp) to present the conjuncture as the crowning moment of centuries of struggle, the editorial then, somewhat unconvincingly, shifts to:

**GEAR-CHANGE II**. – "The real battle, beyond pomp and ceremony and the symbolism of a new flag and anthem, has just begun." How does this square with the earlier claim that what we have just witnessed is "*the* moment", "*real* change"? But, leaving this aside, what is the content of the "*real* battle" that now still lies ahead? It is clearly (and correctly) in the mind of the editorialist a battle for

the implementation of the RDP.

But notice how this implementation is conceptualised:

• "Now, ordinary people will rejoice only at the *sight* of the foundation of the first of the million houses..." Ordinary people are reduced to spectators of an RDP process. This is reinforced by:

• The quotation from the "writer on the French Revolution". (Significantly, this unnamed writer is Tocqueville, a conservative 19th century writer. This particular quotation happens to be one that is now frequently quoted by neo-liberals as a warning about the dangers of inciting "rising expectations". It is a quotation beloved by those who want negotiated transitions to be elite affairs.) The quote itself ("Patiently endured so long...") suggests that the mass forces in our country have been passive until this moment, and that it has only now dawned upon them that things could be different.

• And then, in line with all of the above, the editorial goes on: "In June, allocations from the budget will be decided upon. A modest beginning can then be made". This suggests an entirely bureaucratic and state-centred (not people-driven) RDP.

However, the writer seems to be aware of these kinds of allegations, and so to protect this flank, there is a shift to:

**GEAR-CHANGE III** – where the editorial appears to gesture towards a mass-driven process, but only in the most neutralised way: "The ANC must have...confidence in the people..." What does that mean practically? And so:

**GEAR-CHANGE IV** – The inability of the editorial to offer some basic pointers to its readership on what to DO (apart from wait for the June budget) is underlined by the closing sentence: "The deserved victory...will be able to defend and advance *itself*." People have disappeared from the scene, and "victory" is doing all the work by itself. Gear-change IV has put history into automatic.

**Displaying the reasons for the present strategic confusion**

We have dealt at some length with the *Mayibuye* editorial because it has the great merit of displaying visibly many of the reasons for the present strategic and organisational confusion in the ranks of our broad liberation movement. If we are to effectively analyse the present situation we need at least to begin to:

**1**. correctly characterise what has happened as a result of the elections;

**2.** defend a progressive interpretation of the process over these past four years;

**3.** correctly characterise the main political challenges confronting the lib-

eration movement; and
**4.** provide some *practical* guidelines to our cadres and members on how to move forward.

So far (and the *Mayibuye* article is typical) we have not been doing well in any of these regards. What follows is an attempt to outline a broad framework (no more) for the first three of these issues (the fourth is left to the separate discussion on Organisation and a Programme of Action):

**The election victory must neither be over- nor understated**

## 1. THE POST-ELECTION SITUATION

**1.1** The April election was an extremely important victory for our liberation struggle. The huge majority backing for the ANC, which we have always claimed, was decisively demonstrated. The extreme right-wing had calculated that its campaign of bombings and general destabilisation would result in a poor turn-out. The disciplined mass turnout was a decisive rebuff to these forces. Once more, at a critical turning point, the process was mass-driven. However, despite the historical significance of the elections, it is entirely wrong to portray them as the culmination of the National Democratic Revolution. The election was an extremely important moment in the process of an unfolding and still lengthy NDR. The election victory must neither be over- nor understated.

**1.2** The election has, generally, and once more, altered the relative balance of forces in our country. It has considerably strengthened the ANC-alliance. In the government of national unity the ANC is dominant. The ANC is also strong in the 400-seat National Assembly (with over 60% of the deputies, including 51 communists). In the 90-seat senate the ANC has exactly two-thirds (60) of the senators. In most of the nine provincial assemblies there are also ANC majorities with the exceptions of Western Cape and Natal.

**1.3** But the balance of forces remains complex, the security forces, the civil service, the control and ownership of the economy, the media, the judiciary — in all of these areas, we are inheriting a white-minority and capitalist legacy. Protracted transformation struggles lie ahead, and clearly such transformation requires effective use of our new positions in government *and* co-ordination of these new positions with our traditional power-base — our mass and community-based structures.

**1.4** However, our own extra-parliamentary areas of traditional strength, in the mass and community-based movements, are certainly not as powerful as they were in the second half of the 1980s. The ANC and SACP organisational structures are also extremely weak on the ground.

**1.4.1** This is all partly the result of our successes, which are now involving the relocation of hundreds of seasoned cadres into national and provincial legislatures, into the civil service, and soon into local government. Of course, it would be wrong to imagine that these cadres are all now suddenly lost to the extra-parliamentary movement. Clearly ANC MPs and others will need to be deployed for all kinds of organisational work. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the movement of large numbers of former full-time or highly active cadres into new jobs is impacting upon grass-roots organisation, various sectoral formations, and upon the ANC itself as a liberation movement.

**1.4.2** But the dislocation of our mass and community-based formations is also related to the new strategic challenges facing them. Many major sectoral formations (the unions, the civics) are calling for a "back to basics" orientation, sensing that in the past years, they have been too drawn into technical, national negotiating forums. What is more, in getting back to basics, these sectoral formations cannot simply return, mechanically, to the 1980s. They will have to adjust (of course not completely) from a more oppositional into a more developmental mode — without losing their combativeness. All of these pose difficult challenges.

**1.5** And what will become of the new ANC political stratum (perhaps some tens of thousands in number), the new ministers, provincial executives, local government cadres, MPs, top civil servants and professional security personnel? We should also add the hundreds of ANC cadres now being promoted, with varying degrees of sincerity, by the private sector in the name of affirmative action. All of these cadres will certainly be subjected to conflicting pressures. At the moment many of the new ANC ministers find themselves isolated within their own ministries. Will they become hostages of the old civil servants and of their new privileges, or will their precarious position spur them to seek continual reinforcement from the mass movement? Clearly, we cannot just leave these things to chance. As a party, and as an integral member of the ANC-led alliance, we will have to develop clear organisational and strategic interventions that ensure that the onward momentum of the NDR is sustained.

In doing this we shall have to:

## 2. DEFEND AND POPULARISE A CLEAR PERSPECTIVE ON THE LESSONS OF THE PAST FOUR YEARS

**2.1** As the SACP has repeatedly emphasised, there has been a consistent campaign by our strategic opponents to transform the ANC. Having failed to defeat and liquidate the ANC in previous decades, their agenda is to transform it into a narrow neo-colonial bureaucracy and/or, at best, a centre-left electoral machine. Drawing the correct lessons from the



**Reserve Bank governor Chris Stals: "The RDP is unworkable." (April 1994) "The RDP offers a real opportunity." (June 1994)**

past four years is part of the struggle to counter this agenda.

**2.2** Our neo-liberal strategic opponents constantly try to undermine our confidence in our own mass-based strength. Mass campaigns, Self Defence Units, MK, the National Peace Keeping Force, militant personalities (notably Chris Hani before his death), the SACP and socialist and progressive ideas, all are the targets of systematic attempts to undermine their legitimacy. Neo-liberal voices have even attempted to analyse the election result in centrist terms:

"In seven exhilirating days, South Africa became hostile territory for the radicals and ideologues of the Left and Right. A new country, with a distinctive thrust to its politics was born...The radical Left, in the form of the PAC, was devastated...The Radical Right in the form of the Freedom Front was contained to a mere 2,9 percent." (Hugh Robertson, "Radicals left out in the cold", *The Star*, 4 May 1994).

The *Beeld* (May 2, 1994) had a similar editorial analysis, claiming that the PAC's electoral performance shows that: "South Africans are tired of revolutionary parties."

**2.3** In order to draw the correct conclusions about how to continue the struggle in the coming period, it is absolutely essential that we defend and popularise the past four years as essentially a mass-driven process. In doing this we are not exaggerating or bending the truth, on the contrary. In this regard, our Party chairperson's 20th November 1993 political overview presented to the CC remains absolutely relevant:

"The experience of the past three years proved that negotiations are a

terrain of struggle which, at the end of the day, depend upon the balance of forces outside the process. It was the link between the negotiations and our mass struggle that played an absolutely key role".

This does not mean, of course, as cde Slovo immediately went on to say at the time, that we uncritically romanticise all mass activity in the last period. Nor does it mean that we should overlook periods in the past four years in which we failed, for various reasons, to give adequate leadership to the mass movements.

In order to defend the mass-line we need also to accurately locate our activity within the context of:

## 3. THE THREE BASIC POLITICAL CHALLENGES OF OUR PERIOD

Some of the strategic confusion (in the *Mayibuye* editorial, for instance) comes from an inability to distinguish and interrelate three distinct, overlapping and to some extent conflicting political challenges.

### 3.1 A consensus against barbarism.

**3.1.1** The first challenge has been to build a massive national (and international) consensus against a descent into barbarism in SA. This is a consensus against the destabilisation of the whole democratisation process, including the elections and the newly elected institutions.

**3.1.2** Three or four months ago this challenge was, perhaps, the most pressing challenge. At the beginning of the year there was a significant extreme right-wing threat. The plans of the white and the black right-wing alliance were aimed at undermining the elections with armed uprisings in many parts of SA.

**3.1.3** To guard against this danger and to build a consensus against this danger, certain concessions have had to be made — the GNU itself; assurances from the ANC that there would not be wholesale persecution of apartheid security personnel for past sins; assurances about relative job security for all civil servants; assurances to the international community about future economic policies — all of these have been part of meeting this challenge. We can, and need of course, to debate whether we have conceded too much.

**3.1.4** It was (and is) not always easy to develop an accurate estimate of the dangers of the extreme-right in our country. For their own purposes the old intelligence and security formations (which remain dominant in these areas) often exaggerate the threat. We certainly need always to assess critically the level of threat. But it would be wrong to simply dismiss the threat as fictional. If we wanted to, we could turn SA into a Bosnia or a Rwanda. We could drive battalions of the old SADF into the hands of Terreblanche. We could frighten imperialists into bankrolling Inkatha warlords in an "anti-communist" crusade. All of these things were (and are) possible.

**3.1.5** This first challenge, which was arguably the most pressing challenge

at the beginning of the year, is now less important, primarily because we have, for the moment, successfully met the challenge. We have (for the moment) marginalised the extreme right-wing. It has no notable external or internal backers. We have split the right-wing alliance, and we have drawn elements of this alliance into the process.

**3.1.6** But we cannot simply be satisfied with this, as cde Mac Maharaj appears to be:

**There are clearly different agendas at work**

"We are on the threshold of achieving our lifetime's objectives...We have put national unity and reconciliation on the forefront of the first government...Those achievements are what the people wanted and what the people gave their lives for." (*The Star*, 1 May 1994)

We do not want stability for its own sake. We did not want elections merely for the pleasure of making our X's. Which brings us to:

## 3.2 A consensus around the RDP

The second challenge is to build a massive national consensus, not just around stability and against barbarism, but *for* real reconstruction and development. Today it is this challenge that is, perhaps, most in the foreground. And here, too, we are now beginning to win the battle. Just three or four months ago, there was a major offensive against the Reconstruction and Development Programme. The RDP was said to be completely unrealistic. Today, Derek Keys, FW De Klerk, big business, Armscor, Stals, international governments are all talking RDP language. The sincerity of their commitment to the RDP remains to be tested. There are clearly different agendas at work. Stals, for instance, speaks of "marrying" the NP's old Normative Economic Model and the RDP (as if the two things were not considerably different). The building societies say they support the RDP, but then say that we must distinguish between "effective housing demand" (i.e what is profitably demanded), and "mere need" (i.e. the situation in which the majority find themselves). We must, by persuasion, encouragement and compulsion, gain the co-operation of the private sector and other players in implementing the RDP. But this co-operation cannot simply be taken for granted, and nor can lip-service support be taken at face value.

Which brings us to:

## 3.3 A mass-driven, ANC-alliance led RDP process

We should certainly not try to monopolise or jealously guard the RDP for ourselves. But the major lesson to be learnt from these past four years

is that transition is either mass-driven, or it is empty. Put another way, in seeking to consolidate the above two consensuses, we must at all times struggle to ensure a working class and popular hegemony over them. The struggle for democratisation must be led by working class and popular forces. The RDP must be biased in its objectives and in its manner of implementation (as the document itself says) towards the needs of the majority. Many struggles, from within and without government, lie ahead of us. Without mobilised, politicised mass and community-based formations, we will not be able to drive the democratisation process forward. In particular, the following tasks need to be highlighted:

**3.3.1** A major effort to reorganise and consolidate our mass- and community-based organisations, including the organisational machinery of the party. This effort must be focused around driving the RDP. We need, urgently, to begin to give more concrete content to what we mean by terms like "a mass-driven RDP". We cannot simply leave it at the level of generalities. We need in many practical ways to help people become active participants in the process of transformation;

**3.3.2** Struggles for the thorough-going transformation of the state — both in those institutions in which we are weak (eg. in the security forces), and in those in which we are relatively strong (the legislatures);

**3.3.3** The all-round co-ordination of Congress forces, in and out of government, and across various sectoral formations (COSATU, SANCO, etc.). We need to use our positions in government to strengthen our mass forces, and vice versa.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The three challenges outlined under 3. are *all* important. We must avoid the temptation just to emphasise one of them in a one-sided way. If we spend all our time trying to woo ex-SAP generals and top civil servants in the name of stability, we will fail to address the real reasons for instability in our country. If we exaggerate the second challenge, building a happy, all-embracing consensus for the RDP, we might just blind ourselves to the very different class agendas at play. We certainly need to regroup and mobilise social and community based organisations. But nor must we stress this task in a one-sided way. You cannot build houses, let alone trade unions or civics in a Bosnia.

In the coming months, the SACP has an important leading role to play. In developing our ideological outlook, our organisational capacity and our programme of action, we need to be guided by the above considerations. ★

*18th June 1994*

# The RDP – A site for socialist struggle

After trying to dismiss it, many of our opponents are now paying lip-service to the ANC-alliance's Reconstruction and Development Programme. So what kind of programme is it? Is it a programme for socialists? **Patrick Bond** argues that the RDP can be taken off in a number of directions. But, he concludes, it contains real socialist potential, provided we treat it as a guideline, not a bible.

The ANC/Alliance/MDM Reconstruction and Development Programme — the new government's main policy framework — is being interpreted in many different ways. It is baffling, but somehow we must make sense of the following:

• In his first post-election interview (*Sunday Times*, May 1), President Nelson Mandela remarks that the RDP document contains "not a word about nationalisation" — but it appears that neither Mandela nor interviewer Ken Owen read as far as page 80, where the RDP cites the need for "increasing the public sector in strategic areas through, for example, nationalisation."

• The ANC's recently-named Labour Minister, Tito Mboweni, "declares triumphantly" to the *Economist* (February 5) that minimum wages and nationalisation get no mention in the RDP (wrong on both counts).

• Already a month into his new job (6 June), Defence Minister Joe Modise advances the extraordinary claim that Armscor "has the capability to participate meaningfully in the Reconstruction and Development Programme."

• In the wake of the election, hawkish National Party Western Cape Premier (and former Law and Order Minister) Hernus Kriel, KwaZulu/Natal Inkatha premier Frank Mdlalose, and Gencor chief executive Marinus Daling (one of SA's most irresponsible capitalists) all endorse the RDP. So do a variety of ministers, parliamentarians and other business elites at national and provincial levels who have never

cracked the RDP book, much less ever considered the logistical difficulties of meeting the nation's basic needs.

• Similarly, Eskom Chief Executive Allen Morgan points out his desire to support the RDP in a *Weekly Mail and Guardian* interview (May 13-19), but Morgan rules out the cross-subsidisation from rich whites to poor blacks which is explicitly recommended by the RDP (*WM&G* interviewer Reg Rumney was silent). Morgan subsequently announces his intention to raise foreign loans for one third of Eskom's mass electrification projects, a financing route explicitly prohibited by the RDP.

Whether blame for such mystification should be levelled at pliant politicians or gullible journalists is beside the point. In short, so much murkiness characterises interpretation of the RDP that it may be helpful to review the deeper ideological channels through which the ideologically-motivated commentary swirls.

There are at least three ways to read the RDP: from the Left (whose perspective we can consider "socialist"), the Centre ("social democratic") and the Right ("neo-liberal"). Here we can consider those aspects of the RDP in which organisations and individuals which support traditional Left values, and in particular an eventual transition to socialism, can take heart.

To do so is to take the risk of labelling positions which are, in fact, extremely fluid at present. A frenzy of alliance-formation continues between adherents of different ideologies — or sometimes simply between individuals who bear no particular class interest but who are operating in a self-interested and often erratic manner — and therefore the overlays between neo-liberal and social democratic, and social democratic and socialist, are substantial.

## The RDP of the Right and Centre

**There are at least three ways of reading the RDP**

There is no denying that the RDP has been deeply penetrated by traditionally conservative ideas, such as maintaining excessively strict limits on state expenditure generally (with a projected stagnation in the education budget in particular), the promotion of international competitiveness, and the endorsement of an independent Reserve Bank (insulated from democratic policy inputs).

Moreover, what is not in the RDP is also revealing. There is a profound failure to grapple with the challenges posed by the private property rights of the constitution, especially with respect to land reform and anti-eviction rights. And the complete lack of attention to monetary policy and the failure to protest the scheduled onerous repayment of the R62 billion apartheid foreign debt all imply that the exceptionally anti-social,

sado-monetarist policies presently followed by the Church Street branch of the Broederbond (the Reserve Bank) are acceptable. For this neglect, Governor Chris Stals probably sleeps easier.

The RDP's fiscal policy (government spending), monetary policy (control of interest rates and money supply), and trade policy are all acceptable to neo-liberal watchdogs like the IMF. Even industrial policy is peppered with visions of "post-fordist" competitiveness that neo-liberals also often endorse. In sum, in key areas of economic management, it is clear that conservative principles prevailed in the drafting of the RDP.

Yet, when all is said and done, the RDP is much more centrist that it is conservative. The broad presumption is that when the market fails, as it so often does in South Africa, the state will step in to both force capital to follow a long-term rational, non-racial capitalist logic, and to facilitate access to basic goods and services, to environmental and consumer protection, or to industrial and technological development. This is no real challenge to the market, but rather an affirmation of its hegemonic role in the ordering of society, such that the state operates to lubricate the market.

Indeed social democracy in this spirit pervades the document. Calls for a "national endeavour" to implement the RDP have been made by ANC leaders, including those of the Left like RDP Minister Jay Naidoo and Deputy Finance Minister Alec Erwin. In the *SA Labour Bulletin* (Jan-Feb 1994), Erwin also explains the RDP using surprisingly orthodox, modernisation theory language: "The programme to meet basic needs will in fact open new opportunities for the private sector to take up a wide range of economic activities, and for market forces to come into play in areas where they never operated."

The primary problem with Erwin's philosophical position is that the private sector has already been playing a very substantial role in many basic needs markets (housing and taxi transport are easily the two most significant, consuming more than a quarter of the average township household budget). The result has been, by all accounts, disastrous. Indeed it is the need to transcend the limits of the market — for example in housing and local economic development — that led to RDP commitments of new state subsidies (in the case of housing, nearly four times present levels). Certainly centrists and rightists are by no means confident about the ANC's capacity to direct subsidies in a manner beneficial to capital accumulation.

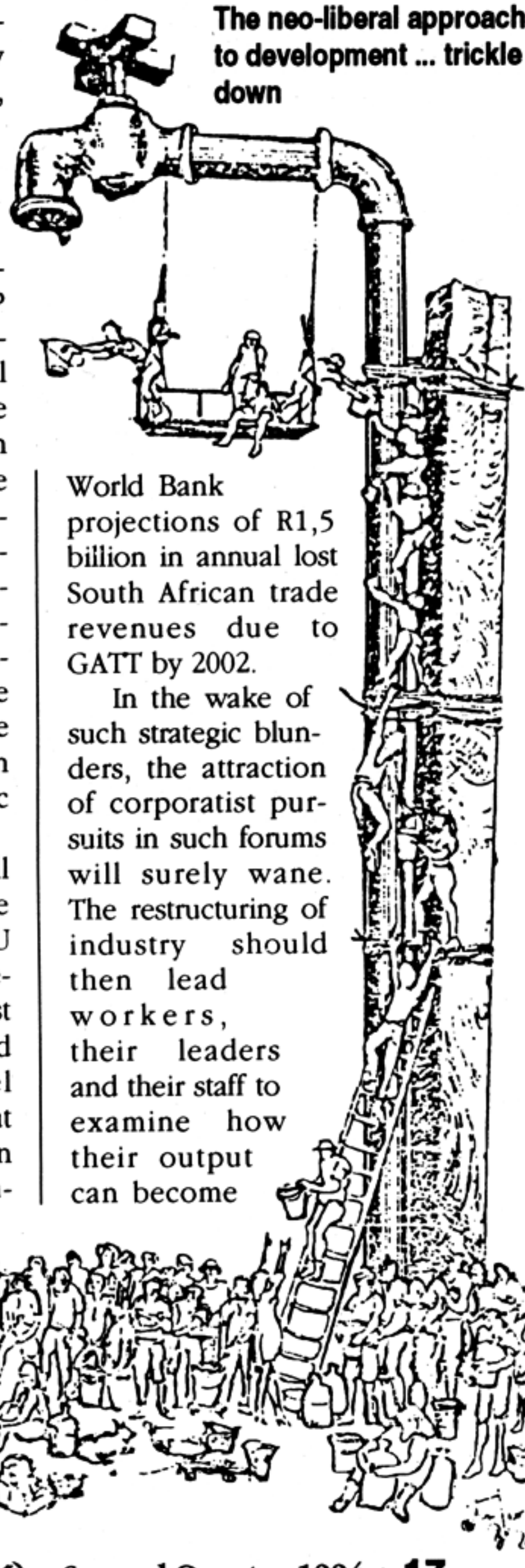
However, it is for another reason that, what would otherwise appear to be an ideal social contract, may yet be spurned by big business. That reason is the broader crisis of South African capitalism, which will continue into the present recovery and beyond, and grow worse as the international law of value bears down on this country's vulnerable industrial sector. Capital has, in the process, lost a chance at developing an ex-

pansive "class-interest," which is reflected in the complaints of Jeremy Baskin — who heads NALEDI, COSATU's main think-tank — that "corporatism" is not feasible in SA due to the lack of effective organisation of business interests.

Nevertheless, the existing socio-economic forums, in which the RDP places excessive faith (notwithstanding a call for their restructuring), will probably remain the domain of the think-tanks of capital (the Urban Foundation's hegemony over the National Housing Forum is one tragic example). There may arise an opportunity to shed these forums' neo-liberal influence (the UF's toilet-fetish, to the detriment of real housing subsidies, for instance), but the centrist spirit of the RDP is more likely to result in their continuation in a conservatising, technocratic mode.

However, ordinary workers will gradually learn that through the National Economic Forum, COSATU staff endorsed the GATT global free-trade agreement in a way "that must make us unique," Trade and Industry Minister Trevor Manuel proudly told his Atlanta audience at the US-SA investment conference in June. Certainly it is a unique capitulation, considering that trade union movements across the world regard GATT as a licence for multinational corporations to loot and pillage. It is a particularly disappointing development, given World Bank projections of R1,5 billion in annual lost South African trade revenues due to GATT by 2002.

In the wake of such strategic blunders, the attraction of corporatist pursuits in such forums will surely wane. The restructuring of industry should then lead workers, their leaders and their staff to examine how their output can become



**The neo-liberal approach to development ... trickle down**

much more closely linked to "use values" — ranging from basic needs consumption goods to the capital goods (machinery) which are unnecessarily imported to South Africa — rather than the "exchange values" which the doctrine of international competitiveness insists must rule economic life.

## A Left defence of the RDP

In *Work in Progress* and the first quarter issue of *The African Communist*, leading SACP intellectuals have defended the RDP as a Left project. Although such a defence is at a nascent level, the central ideas certainly bear consideration. There seem to be two mutually-supportive ways to defend the RDP from the Left: the "decommodification" of basic needs goods, and through potentially socialist reforms posited sporadically within the RDP.

### A) Decommodification of basic goods

The argument for a Left reading of the RDP by Phillip Dexter in *WIP* (Feb-March 1994) is based on the notion that by "gradually infusing the RDP with socialist ideals and practices a socialist programme for SA can be developed." Dexter points in only one really concrete direction: "We need to find ways to ensure alternatives to capitalist markets; for example, by decommodifying certain resources and services." He promotes "communal access to economic resources. Housing, for instance, could be provided through associations, and be offered as non-sellable property rather than rented or privately-owned units."

The RDP specifies precisely this in the section on housing: "Mechanisms (such as time limits on resale, or compulsory repayment of subsidies upon transfer of property) must be introduced to prevent speculation and downward raiding." Indeed this decommodification process is viewed by socialist housing experts as a necessary component, not only of a new mode of production, but even of a social democratic-style solution to the low-income housing crisis. Without the mechanisms which the RDP demands, housing will be bought and sold subject only to financial means, and more privileged class fractions within the townships and rural areas will quickly crowd out the poorer beneficiaries of the subsidies, leading to landlordism and "downward raiding." (This is certainly the international experience with low-cost housing subsidies, and has already been noted — by even the World Bank — as the logical outcome of the neo-liberal Independent Development Trust site-and-service subsidy.) In turn, the insider-outsider dichotomy which has been growing so rapidly since neo-liberal economic policies were adopted by the NP in the late 1980s, will be exacerbated.

At a different level, Jeremy Cronin (*The African Communist*, first quarter, 1994) has advanced an embryonic argument for a "recasting of our theoretical approach (to) help us to understand how we should en-

gage, as socialists, in the RDP." Such a recasting Cronin attributes to COSATU Wits regional secretary Langa Zita, who discusses the imposition of a "working class political economy upon the political economy of capital." As Cronin points out, Marx referred to the formation of cooperatives and the Ten Hours' Bill to shorten the length of the working day in these terms.

Naturally, each reform merits analysis on its own terms, in order to gauge the impact of the specific reform on the workings of the capitalist system, to forge alliances and develop campaigns with such knowledge, and to put this in the context of the struggle for new relations of production more generally. We must be very careful of supporting any reform. COSATU, for example, has been strongly influenced by those calling for a variety of "post-Fordist" reforms. Yet it is very difficult for working-class activists and intellectuals alike to project anything of a socialist future from such "Japanised" capitalist production processes ("flexibility," quality circles, team concept, just-in-time, export-led manufacturing growth, etc).

Such approaches to the present global capitalist crisis are far too conciliatory to capital's own restructuring agenda of speed-up and retrenchment. In contrast, Enoch Godongwana's call (*SALB*, July-August 1993) for "restructuring which is informed by a socialist perspective and which is characterised by working class politics and democratic practice and accountability of leadership" is far closer to the traditions of labour. At the very least, such a perspective must be based on at least two central pillars, namely a much more militant class struggle approach to shopfloor and community struggles than we have been experiencing the past few years, and — as noted in COSATU's NEF failure — a turn from exchange-values to use-values in our understanding of economic restructuring. Alongside other "substantially socialist" reforms, both pillars are potentially strengthened by the RDP.

**In most cases the more visionary arguments won the day**

**B)**
**Substantially socialist reforms**

Consider four areas of potentially non-reformist reforms. First, the Left can take satisfaction in noting the RDP's primary commitment to meeting the basic needs of all South Africans. In nearly every sector, some of the best technical experts of the ANC and MDM debated the merits of extremely detailed proposals for the RDP. In most cases the more visionary, ambitious arguments won the day. The main reason for this, of course, is the legacy of concrete struggles which have been waged over decades to win basic needs goals. These strug-

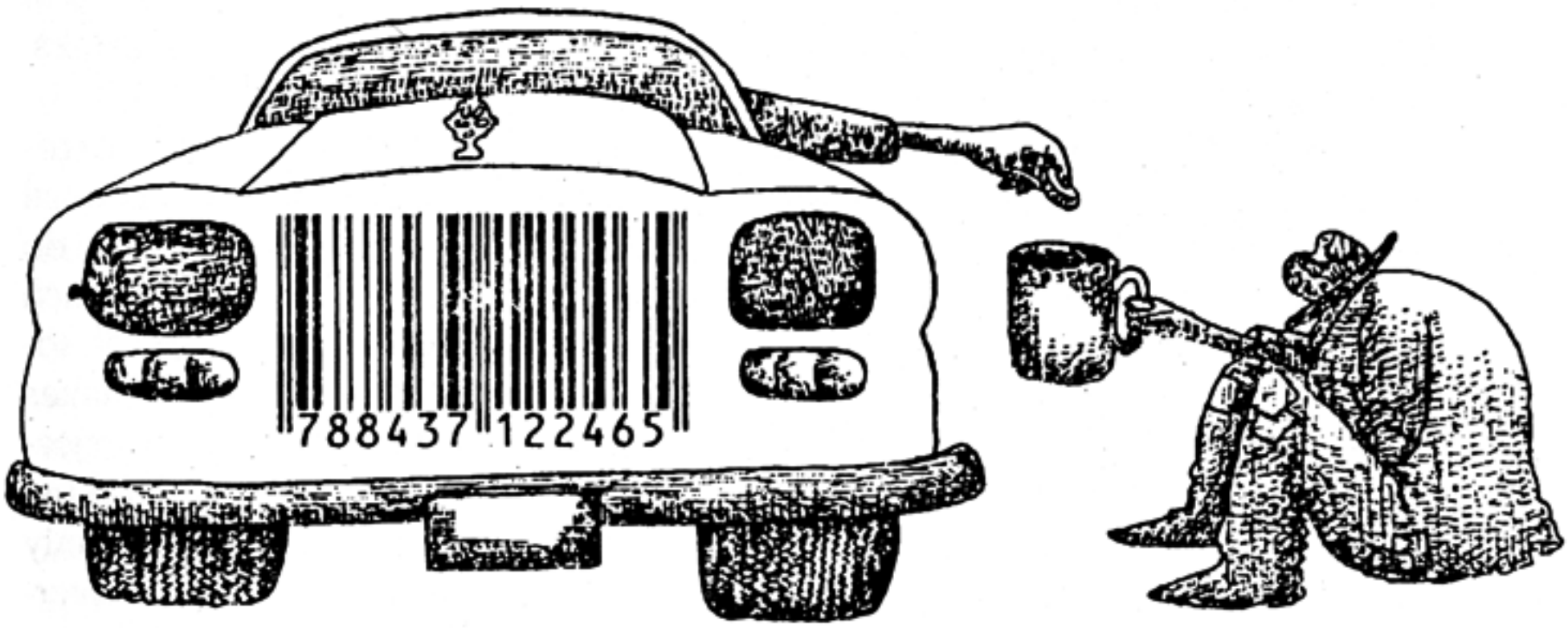
gles cannot, of course, relax, and it is for this reason that the RDP gives a high priority to maintaining capacity within civil society.

Second, the Left can build upon several specific foundations which may one day form the basis for deeper socio-economic transformation. These include a new Housing Bank which can blend subsidies with workers' pension funds (protected against repayment risk) to get low-cost loans; a call to change (by law) the directors of the major mutual insurance companies, Old Mutual and Sanlam; the decisive commitment to reproductive rights, which will empower many women (the RDP is generally very strong in pointing out women's existing oppression, and fair-to-middling on proposed solutions); potential anti-trust attacks on corporate power; and other challenges to the commanding heights of capitalism, racism and patriarchy.

Third, the Left can relax, ever so slightly, that the World Bank (the maximum enemy of poor and working people, and of the Left RDP) will be kept at bay for all intensive purposes. In areas where RDP programmes do not directly contribute to raising foreign exchange — such as housing, health, welfare, education, land reform and the like — the RDP promises that foreign loans will not be taken out. Reasons for this include the high cost of such loans (given rand devaluation), the need to earn extra foreign exchange to repay them (since they are denominated in hard currency) and the neo-liberal conditionality which typically attaches to them. An anti-imperialist spirit can even be detected in the following passage (pp.145-146):

"The RDP must use foreign debt financing only for those elements of the programme that can potentially increase our capacity for earning foreign exchange. Relationships with international financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund must be conducted in such a way as to protect the integrity of domestic policy formulation and promote the interests of the South African population and the economy. Above all, we must pursue policies that enhance national self-sufficiency and enable us to reduce dependence on international financial institutions. Further, we must introduce measures to ensure that foreign governmental and non-governmental aid supports the RDP."

Fourth, the Left can note with pride the commitment to a strong but slim state which will continually empower civil society through both opportunities to input into major decisions, and through capacity-building. The chapter on "Democratising State and Society" is a major victory for the Left, since "deepening democracy" (that overused phrase) now takes on a very weighty content. What is being advanced is popular direct democracy ("community control," "people-driven development," etc.), through which people take control of those vital aspects of their lives which were previously influenced far more by state and market. The RDP's discussion of bour-




geois democracy, in which a semi-representative parliamentary system speaks (and acts and controls) in the name of the people, pales in significance.

## The RDP, civil society and socialism — in South Africa and the world

In sum, to begin to substantiate Cronin's argument, for "the embryonic emergence of socialism (the political economy of labour) in the interstices of capitalist production", is to combine these four areas of substantially socialist reform with the prospect of using the RDP to decommodify — and hence more efficiently, equitably and sustainably supply — the basic goods people require to lead a dignified life. This combination can begin to occur under conditions of more rapid consolidation of a popular, progressive state, of an often incoherent capitalist class, and of continued strengthening of the mass organs which brought the progressive party to power.

Under such conditions, the RDP can act as a guide plan (not a bible) for progressive policy-makers in the state and for radical advocacy groups in civil society. There are dangers, however: the less progressive forces within the state may ignore the RDP or actually change it fundamentally. But the opportunities for the Left to gain sustenance from the RDP in three arenas of struggle are promising:

a) the struggle between labour/ communities/ other exploited groups (in alliance with the state, occasionally) and capital;

b) the struggle between the exploited groups (in alliance with the progressive fraction of the state) and the less progressive fraction of the state; and

c) the struggle within the exploited groups to set up new relations of production (with plenty of financial assistance from the state where needed) within the decay of the old relations of production.

The stress here is building a Left project not only from the standpoint

of organised labour, but from the base of the more advanced social and community movements. How does such thinking correspond with other arguments advanced in the name of socialism?

There is probably no more active a proponent of the road to socialism via "working-class civil society" than Mzwanele Mayekiso, writing in *The African Communist*, *Work in Progress*, *Southern African Review of Books* and elsewhere. But leading WOSA ideologue Neville Alexander also emphatically endorses just such an approach in his most recent book:

**Opportunities for the left to gain sustenance from the RDP**

"Even though we have no reason to be sanguine and simplistic about the contested terrain of "civil society," the existence of which in no way can guarantee a successful process of democratisation, it seems to me that it is in this sphere that we need to concentrate our efforts. In the end, only the independence of these mass formations — their financial independence, their commitment to non-sectarian practices and to the principles of participatory democracy — will carry us over the period of potential erosion of the gains that were made in the seventies and the eighties." (*Some are More Equal than Others*, Cape Town, Buchu Books, p.92.)

This line of argument corresponds to an emerging international realisation that social movements do have a potentially radical approach which is crucial to the kinds of socialist reforms that the RDP makes possible. In turn this implies a rejection of state power in the short-term, until such projects are more firmly established and have built their international linkages, according to Immanuel Wallerstein (and several other contributors to the two most recent volumes of the *Socialist Register*):

"One element must surely be a definitive disjuncture with the past strategy of achieving social transformation via the acquisition of state power. It is not that assuming governmental authority is never useful, but that it is almost never transformatory. The assumption of state power should be regarded as a necessary defensive tactic under specific circumstances in order to keep out ultra-right repressive forces. But state power should be recognised as a pis aller [a cul de sac], which always risks a relegitimation of the existing world order." ("The collapse of liberalism," in R. Miliband and L. Panitch (eds.), *Socialist Register 1992: New World Order?*, London: Merlin Press, pp.108-109.)

But such a strategy is of limited use without a sense of the urgency of a current change of direction in political economy, at neighbourhood, at rural village, at urban and at

higher scales. Leo Panitch and Ralph Miliband chart a broader course not in the least inconsistent with the Left's RDP:

"An approach distant both from ultra-leftism on the one hand and from the politics of accommodation of social democracy on the other will need to be elaborated and developed, given clear and relevant, short-term and longer-term policy meaning and institutional focus. This approach entails an involvement in immediate struggles over a multitude of current issues: in the current moment of economic crisis the most important must be bold programmes for economic recovery which are oriented to employing people directly in the expansion and improvement of the public infrastructure [and in South Africa's case, basic needs goods]... While no such programme will allow one country to escape by itself from the economic crisis, this programme could mitigate the effects of the crisis, and lay the basis for a more ecologically sound, socially just, productive economy in the future. It would contribute, moreover, to giving people a sense that something can be done about the crisis, which is the key to further popular mobilisation in even more radical directions." ("The new world order and the socialist agenda," in *Socialist Register 1992*, pp.22-23.)

The fusion of social movement energy and traditional working-class movement (and party) political programmes is by no means impossible, as the RDP proves. Indeed, at a more philosophical level Michael Lowy confirms that:

"It is from the fusion between the international socialist, democratic and anti-imperialist tradition of the labour movement (still much alive among revolutionaries of various tendencies, radical trade-unionists, left-socialists, etc.) and the new universalist culture of social movements like ecology, feminism, anti-racism and the Third World-solidarity that the internationalism of tomorrow will rise. This tendency may be a minority now, but it is nevertheless the seed of a different future and the ultimate guarantee against barbarism. ("Why nationalism?," in R. Miliband and L. Panitch (eds.), *Socialist Register 1993: Real Problems, False Solutions*, London: Merlin Press, p.138.)

If so, then the RDP has not merely national significance, but its socialist current must run ever deeper, and must be internationalised by the advanced cadres of working class civil society, particularly elsewhere in the Third World. Only then can the bumper-sticker idea, "thinking globally, acting locally," graduate from a slogan to a real programme for international socialism. ★

# Making people-driven development work

## *Selections from the Report of the Commission on Development Finance, 11 April 1994, commissioned by SANCO*

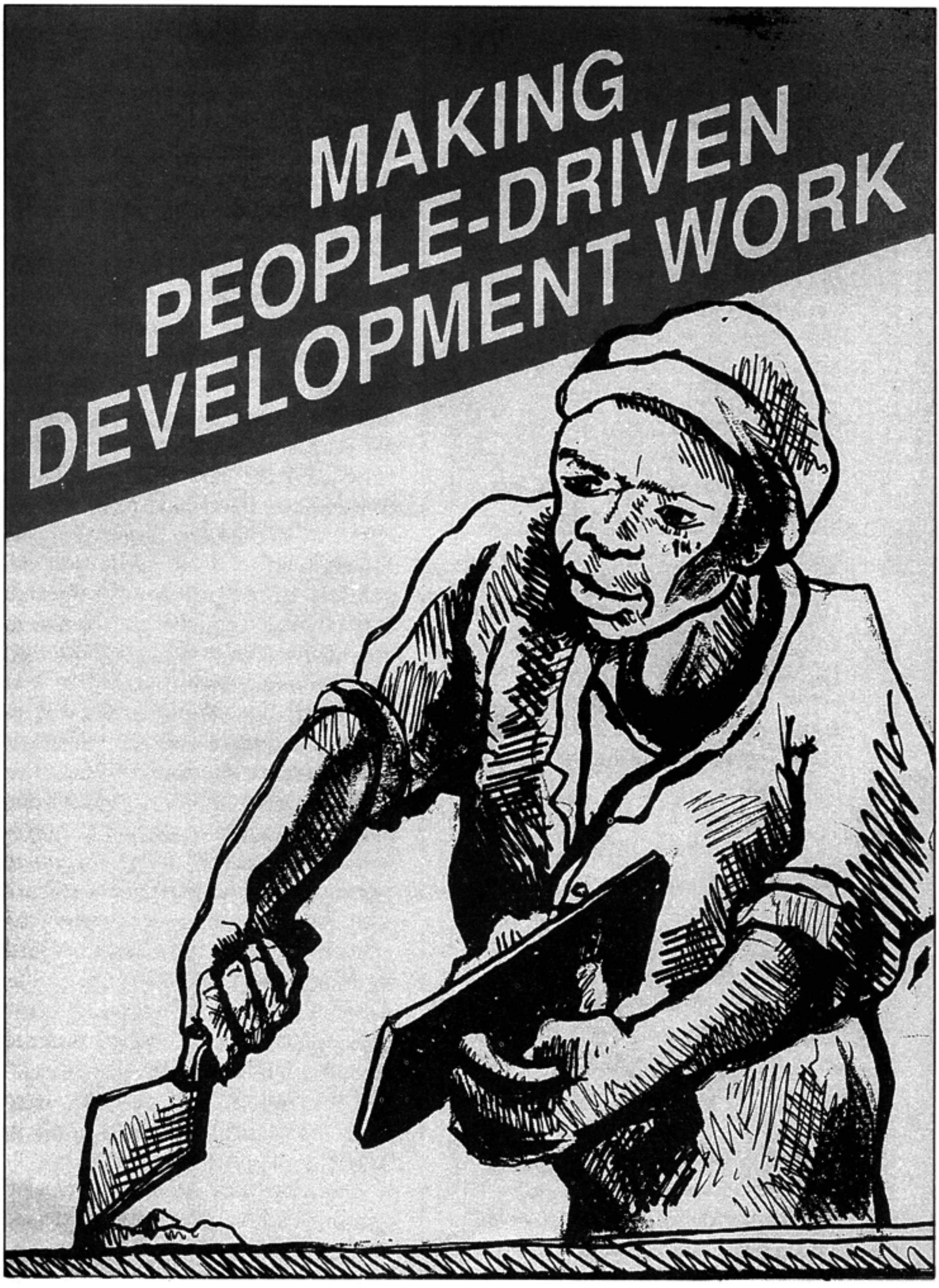
"People-driven development" has become the new in-phrase on the South Africa left. But what does it actually mean in practice? The SA National Civic Organisation recently commissioned a report on development finance. It takes the discussion of people-driven development forward and deserves wide reading. We publish extracts here.

### Only a first step

"Development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry. It is about active involvment and growing empowerment," according to the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Development is "a people-driven process".

"The central objective of our RDP is to improve the quality of life ... through a process of empowerment which gives the poor control over their lives and increases their ability to mobilise sufficient development resources".

This report puts forward some preliminary thinking on what the new government must do to ensure that communities are able to mobilise resources in a way that makes development people-driven. It is based on the understanding that money is power and that to change from the present developer-driven. institution-led, top-down develop-


MAKING
PEOPLE-DRIVEN
DEVELOPMENT WORK

ment to present developer-driven development requires a total reversal of the way resources are distributed. In the past resources were in the gift of governments and development agencies; communities were supplicants. Community-driven development will only occur when communities control the funds.

This is not easy. There are no glib answers and we do not suggest any. But the evidence here and abroad is that communities can effectively control funds and use them more efficiently and honestly than development agencies with bloated and overpaid bureaucracies.

## At the grassroots

People-driven development is more than communities simply agreeing to projects. It means they must take an active part in determining the very nature of the project, in designing it, and even in organising the construction work.

Our study has found numerous examples where civics and other community-based organisations (CBOs) have successfully coordinated or carried out development projects. At the same time, the most consistent complaints about development agencies occur where funding goes to developers and private contractors rather than to communities.

## Communities have the skills

IDT [the Independent Development Trust] has commissioned semi-independent studies of some of its programmes, which underline this point forcefully. The evaluation of the drought relief development programme concluded that IDT "learnt that rural communities possess the skills, judgement, and above all, the desire to manage their own development."

At first IDT talked of a community approach, but its ideas were "vague and the emphasis perhaps fell more on community participation than on project control." Under pressure from commmunities, however, the emphasis shifted "as experience convinced the IDT that many rural communities do indeed have the potential to implement projects ... The sustainability of local capacity is dependent on empowermnet through control over resources and access to information." And the report stressed that "active participation, in our view, only becomes effective if it involves the control over resources."

The report also found that:

- "An analysis of the length of the planning process according to implementing agents shows that genuine community driven projects do not take any longer to complete" the planning phase than those which were done through NGOs and public sector agencies.
- "Rural community structures are able to administer a substantial budget, are capable of supervising large work teams and have the skills to deliver quality outputs."
- "The system of community elected committees has been an unequivocal success."

The report concludes that "there

appears to be no convincing reason" for the use of NGOs or government agencies and that IDT should "make almost exclusive use of community committees as implementing agents."

## Participation essential

Meanwhile, a still to be completed study of the IDT site and service (capital subsidy) scheme will be a harsh indictment of top-down development. It notes the scheme stressed delivery and pipe in the ground. Site and service was "developer-driven"; consultation and participation were intentionally limited in order to get the job done quickly. But it was more than that. One member of the study said they "gained a consistent impression that IDT was wary of allowing community leadership too much say"; developers, professional, and local government also resisted community involvement. Consultants' mistrust of civics and their attempts to bypass civics delayed some projects.

This has resulted in badly chosen sites which have not been occupied and the failure to organise maintenance leading to "a high risk" of collapse of roads, outlets and pipes.

The study notes that the single biggest complaint — greater even than the vociferous objection to getting a toilet and not a house — was about the lack of consultation and participation. One team member commented: "This is not just political rhetoric as some would assume. It is a genuine desire on the part of community organisations to be taken seriously and be given due responsibility for implementation."

The "few" instances in which communities were able to force IDT to give them an active role were the smoother-running projects.

Indeed, the only aspect that worked well was the one where communities were in charge — site allocation. "Community structures proved themselves capable of ensuring that fair, transparent and widely supported mechanisms of allocation were put in place." IDT could not have done as well on its own, commented the researchers. "More than any other argument, this demonstrates that more could have been achieved in other aspects of the projects had the local organisations been trusted and trained to make critical decisions."

## No surprises

Such reports may come as a surprise to IDT and the development establishment, but not to members of this Commission. We cite these two studies at such length precisely because they come from a large mainstream agency and confirm what so many grassroots development workers — and communities themselves — have been saying all along.

Our experience also is that capacity grows when communities have something to work towards — a concrete project such as water or housing. In that way, money stimulates organisation. One of our Commission members noted that she

watched some of the poorest and most dispossessed communities successfully establish creches within nine months, once they knew money was available.

We also support the system of in-principle approach introduced by IDT in its drought relief and development programme. Community groups and others were able to sumbit quite simple and scrappy initial proposals on which a decision was taken within seven days. With in-principle approval, the community could then work on a detailed plan with some confidence that the project would be approved; this clearly had a capacity building effect. By contrast, most NGOs and donors require proposals to be detailed before they will look at them; many communites have had hopes raised by NGO representatives or other facilitators only to have those hopes dashed when the proposal was rejected. The effect is decapacitating rather than capactiy building.

## Money and power

Money is power, and apartheid power relations will never be redressed until communities control development funds. The RDP recognises this when it says that housing subsidies "must be paid directly to individuals, groups or community controlled institutions." This is in contrast to the payment of subsidies directly to developers.

There is also a practical reason for this. Bad housing construction led to many bond boycotts; often this bad construction was gross and corrupt, such as houses built without foundations. Housing and site and service schemes were often built on land which a developer wanted to sell, rather than in a place where people wanted to live. If local people had controlled the money, these expensive mistakes would not have been made.

It will require significant amounts of money to capacitate community groups, but the savings from preventing mistakes and corruption could be as least as large. And communities are more likely to maintain projects that they have controlled, reducing future costs.

Strong community involvement also ensures much greater participation by community members as workers and contractors, and means that more of the project money remains in the community to stimulate the local economy further.

The RDP puts substantial stress on community-based organisations. "Locally controlled housing associations or cooperatives must be supported." "Village water committees" should be created in rural areas, where clean water is seen as the top priority.

## Group ownership

The apartheid government and all of its development agencies put a blinkered stress on single ownership — that houses and farms must be owned by individuals. The RDP calls for other forms of ownership. It calls, for example, for "the development of new and innovative forms of tenure such as Community Land Trusts and

other forms of group land holding. On housing "the democratic government must ensure a wide range of tenure options including individual and collective home ownership as well as rental".

Group tenure and ownership are empowering because they give people experience of working together. There are also practical advantages. Throughout the world, housing associations and cooperatives have proved to be efficient and sensitive providers of affordable housing.

One of the most useful and important aspects is likely to be community liability and responsibility. Poor people without permanent jobs are rarely able to obtain loans — from small loans for informal trading to larger loans such as house bonds — even if they are able to pay from their income. The history of collective liability and responsibility is that if a group of people take out a loan, they ensure it is repaid; if one group member falls ill or becomes unemployed, the others temporarily cover the payments. Small business loans are often more easily made to groups of people in the same trade, such as carpenters or car mechanics, who may also be sharing equipment and premises. Conservative private institutions will not readily lend to such groups, but a new state development bank could do so profitably.

## What is a "community"?

It is essential to be more precise about what a "community" is, how to ensure that community groups are representative, and what the relationship is between communities and the new democratic local governments. None of these three questions are easy and they will continue to be debated for many years to come. In the next few sections, we discuss these issues and try to lay down some broad guidelines, knowing that we cannot be definitive and that many books will still be written on the subject.




We consider a "community" to be a geographically defined set of people who are few enough in number for direct democracy — meetings and assemblies — to be practical. Thus a community will be one or two urban neighbourhoods, a small town, or a few nearby villages.

Communities tend to define themselves and this should be accepted, unless the boundary has been intentionally defined to exclude some group on grounds of race, income, etc.

Because of the geography and history of apartheid, communities involved in their own development will normally be of disadvantaged people. Community groups may join compacts and forums with groups from previously privileged sectors of society, but these sectors would not normally be seen as part of the same community. This will change over time, as apartheid geography and disparities are broken down.

Community-based organisations (CBOs) are voluntary bodies within a community — civics, parents' associations, traders' groups, etc. Some will be representative, while others such as churches and sports clubs represent special interests.

## Representative community groups

Communities are never homogenous or unified. Inevitably different people will have different interests. So if community groups are to carry out development activities effectively, they must be broadly representative, reflecting the interests of all the diverse groups in the community. They cannot be dominated by one party, a warlord, traditional leaders or men. They cannot be hijacked by a special interest group.

Truly representative groups will be a challenge to the vested interests that dominate many communities. Aparthed and the lack of democratic institutions mean that some communities are controlled with an iron fist by thugs, warlords or hated chiefs. People may be frightened to join forums without the approval of the headman.

There are no easy solutions. It will take time and outside support to build community groups which incorporate both traditional leaders and acitivists, old men as well as young women, home owners and shack dwellers, and so on. Sometimes the problems are more subtle. We have noted many examples of civics which are accepted as representative; but others are not. We noted one instance where the civic was broadly representative of all political interests but was male dominated and came into conflict with the local women's group. Some civics have represented most of the community but come into conflict with traditional leaders.

This problem is not just academic; people have been killed when broadly acceptable development projects conflict with the interest of a small group in a community, for example, illegal migrants who did not want to register with any agency, or thugs who saw an illegal business threatened. Small groups in the community, or individual traditional leaders, cannot be allowed to veto projects. But ways must be found to accommodate their needs.

This is directly relevant, because we have argued that representative community goups have a right to ca-

pacity building finance. The challenge is to define effective minimum standards to ensure that groups really do represent the entire community, while not creating complex bureaucratic hurdles. Communities must be able to understand and comply with the rules without outside help.

Creating a representative group is likely to be a long and continuing process. Apparently broadly based community groups may still only represent the elites and powerful groups, or may be taken over by them. But part of capacity building is enabling people to articulate their needs, and encouraging them to challenge authorities which do not represent them.

Composition of committees can often play a defining role in setting priorities. For example, the study of the IDT drought relief development programme noted that committees consisting primarily of women opted for creches, clinics, water systems and income generating projects, while male committees showed a bias toward stock dams, fencing, road construction and business centres. Older people preferred farming activities while younger ones wanted community and recreation facilites. Teacher-dominated committees wanted school extensions.

## Development forums and trusts

In our study, the Commission saw a number of examples of successful community development organisations. Community Development Forums and civics seem able to bring disparate interest groups together. Community-based Development Organisation (CBDOs) have shown that they can actually carry out development.

The RDP says "government must support capacity building in the district councils, local councils and voluntary community structures such as local development forums. To advise communities of their options, it must train a cadre of Community Development Officers." We note that the word "officers" has a very bad connotation, so we will refer to these people as "Community Development Facilitators" (CDF).

There will be many routes to representative community groups and CBDOs, and whatever system is established must be flexible while also having clear and simple rules. There is an urgent need to put in place some structure, however temporary, that recognises community groups as representative, gives them capacity building funding, and supports the establishment of CBDOs. In what follows, we propose a two step system. This is not the only possible system, and it may not be the best one. We propose it here as way of opening a discussion. In addition, we call for the setting up of a rapid study group to collect together quickly the substantial amount of material which already exists on representative CBOs and CBDOs. Based on this, it should refine our suggestions or make alternative proposals. The study might also identify com-

mon capacity building needs.

Our suggestion is that community groups would get help from the new Community Development Facilitators, NGOs, the new housing bank, or other agencies to form Community Development Forums which are broadly representative of all disadvantaged people in the community. Once approved, they would have a right to government capacity building finance to help them to establish a CBDO, which would then have preferential access to development finance.

## Starting out

Nearly all communites have a range of community groups: civics, church groups, clubs, burial societies, stokvels, farmers' groups, etc. Established communities may have more and better organised groups, but even highly mobile communities with many migrants or recent arrivals are likely to have some kind of community groups.

The first step would be for several of these groups to get together and agree to try to create a local development forum. Where there is a strong and representative civic, it could play the leading role. The civic or committee could do this on their own, or might request help from an NGO or another community which has already gone through the process.

## Community development facilitators

When the corps of Community Development Facilitators has been established, they would be expected to spend a week or one day a week over several weeks with the initial committee or civic, helping to broaden the base and set up a forum. The CDF would need to be someone who spoke the local language but who did not come directly from the community.

A key task of the CDF would be to have informal interviews with people in the community to try to compile a list of exisiting organisations and of people trusted in the community — at all levels and including at least half women, to ensure that the list does not simply include traditional leaders and established power brokers. These groups and people should be drawn into the process. The CDF should also try to determine if the founding committee represents just one faction in the community, or is broadly representative.

The CDF should have access to small amounts of money, say up to R500, which could be given to the founding committee for its initial expenses. This committee would call the public meetings needed to establish the forum.

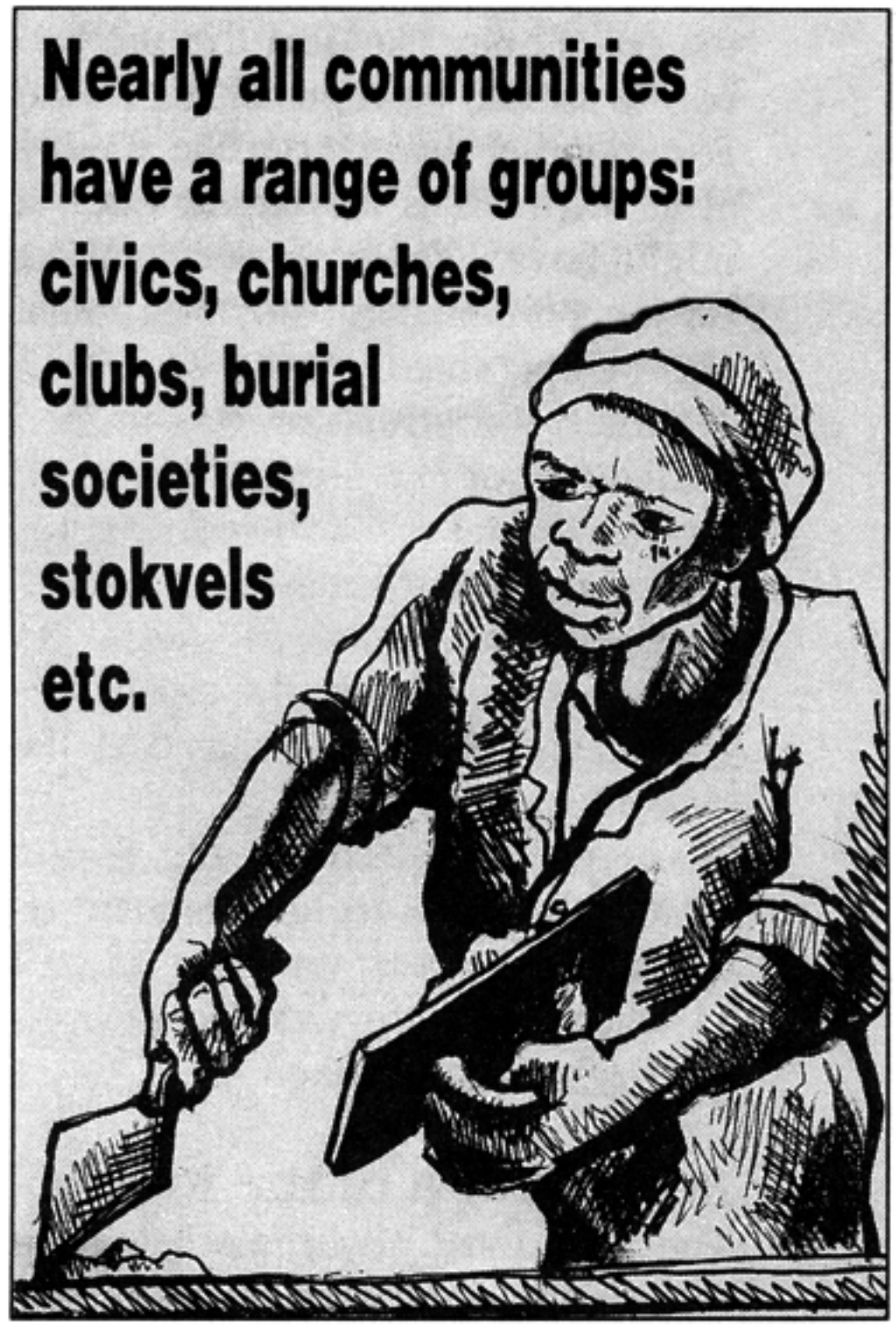
CDF's must be facilitators and not gatekeepers or prescribers. A CDF should help the community to articulate its own needs, and should tell the community what funding is available. Communities must be allowed their own way forward even if the CDF does not agree, so long as the outcome is broadly representative. But the line between setting mini-

mum conditions and prescribing ways to do things is sometimes very fine.

Finally, it is essential to separate the roles of facilitator and inspector. In particular, the CDF cannot be used to authorise or refuse grants or land — the development bank or the reconstruction office must send someone separate to assess whether the community satisfies the criteria. There are two reasons for this. First, a facilitator may become too close to a community, and not have a clear view of their suitability for a loan. Second, the primary role of the facilitator must be to assist the community, and therefore they must have the total trust of the community; if the CDF also authorises loans, a community may be less honest with the CDF about its problems. (We exclude the tiny initial R500 grant from this.)

## The Local Development Forum

The first step would be for the initial committee to have a series of public meetings or assemblies, held at different times of the day to accommodate people with daytime or evening responsibilities. In larger communities, different meetings would be in different villages or neighbourhoods. These meetings must be well publicised, both orally and in writing, and announced two weeks in advance. They would establish: 1) the need for a forum, 2) who should be on it, and 3) what the development priorities for the area are.




The Forum should have a mix of members delegated by community groups and members elected by the community. By law, members should stand for renomination or re-election at least every two years. Also by law, at least half of the members should be women.

Other rules would be set by the community. All interest groups of disadvantaged people should be able to send delegates but the community should decide how this would be done. For example, in an area where the churches are strong, religious groups might elect a joint delegate. In an area of tension between two politial factions or parties,

the community may feel that the two parties should be represented on the Forum rather than be outside sniping at it. If a civic is the largest CBO, it might have two or three members on the Forum. Local notables might also be appointed.

Once the structure was agreed and members chosen, the Forum would then present itself for approval at another series of community assemblies. A record should be kept of attendance at the assemblies and of any objections voiced at the meetings.

As well as elections, the Forum would also need to hold regular assemblies — at least annually, as well as whenever there was a controversial decision to be taken.

## Registration of the forum

The new local government legislation requires the establishment of a local negotiating forum which covers the entire municipal area and includes local government bodies, civic associations and political parties. Such forums are to be registered by the administrator of the Province. Local development forums are very different, because they represent only disadvantaged groups in a small community. But the registration mechanism seems appropriate. Therefore, we call for the creation of a registration system for local development forums, which would certify that they are representative of a given community. This could be done by the Administrator of the Province, as with local negotiating forums, or by a special Registrar of Community Development Forums.

To register, a Community Development Forum would need to show it was genuinely representative of all interests by satisfying a set of clear and simple rules. In particular, it would need to have satisfied the conditions set out above about public meetings, membership, etc.

If the assemblies approved the Forum and if it submitted the required doumentation, the registrar would give it preliminary approval. Notices would be posted prominently in the community inviting objections. If there were no substantive objections, say within a month, the Forum would be approved as the representative of all disadvantaged interests in the community. But the registrar must be able to investigate objections. We were told of one instance where a civic established a development forum. An individual in the community submitted an impressive looking petition to an NGO saying the forum was not representative and saying that he should be given money to set up a proper one; later investigation showed most of the signatures to be fake.

## Role of the forum

The Forum would have four roles. Most importantly, it would speak for the community on development issues. It would be the main contact point for local and regional government. It would help to choose the site for a new primary school or health centre, discuss road plans, and consider proposed new developments. It would also play a key

role in setting priorities — is housing more important than a new school? Which vacant site should be developed for housing first? and so on. In areas where there is a community compact, the Forum would represent disadvantaged groups in the compact; it would also be represented on the local negoatiating forum.

Second, it should begin work on a priority development project, such as housing or water. Experience shows that a concrete project is needed to build an organisation. As part of this, it should set up a CBDO.

Third, it should look to other development projects, such as creches or support for local small business. A key function should be to set up a local savings club or credit union, which would be encouraged to give loans to groups in the community. This is a particularly important way of keeping money within the community and supporting local micro enterprise. Also, savings clubs have had some success in becoming a meeting point, particularly for women.

Fourth, the forum must participate in local and regional networks of forums — to share ideas about development, experiences with CDFs and NGOs, etc. Networking is the best way for communities to learn from each other.

In some areas, the community may not feel the need for a Development Forum. For example, the local civic may be representative enough and the community may see no need to create yet another organisation. If the Community Development Officer or the registrar agreed that this was the community wish, then a civic or other existing organisation should be able to move directly to form a broadly based CBDO and should get the capacity building finance to do so — without being formally recognised as a development forum.

## CBDOs and development trusts

The final step is to establish a legally recognised Community-based Development Organisation (CBDO) which can hold land, be given grants, sign contracts with builders, become a financial intermediary, etc. The form of a Community Development Trust seems simplest, but many other models are available such as housing associations and non-profit companies (Section 21 or otherwise). Whatever form is chosen, members must be accountable to the community. Again there should be delegated and elected members; again there must be elections or renominations every two years; again half must be women. But the mix should be different from the Forum, with fewer political representatives and more people with practical development, construction and business skills. Trustees should not be able to amend the bylaws of the trust except through a people's assembly.

The Forum is a policy-making body; the CBDO is an implementing body. The CBDO reports to the

Forum. National regulations must ensure that CBDOs have preferential access to development funds.

A Trust will normally be set up to carry out a specific project, often housing. But once that has started, it probably will want to take on other development initiatives.

On a housing project, the CBDO would collect the subsidies of individual participants. It would hire consultants, architects and others to help it plan the project. It would normally also hire a project manager. The CBDO or its project manager could serve as its own contractor and actually organise the house building — which might be particularly appropriate where there is partial self-building — or it might contract a local or national building firm.

Finally, as well as Forum-based CBDOs, there are also beneficiary-based CBDOs. Often structured as cooperatives, these are groups building something for their own benefit, such as housing co-ops building their own homes, or a group of artisans building shared workshop space. So long as the community considers their activity acceptable and not contradicting its priorities, beneficiary-based CBDOs should also be backed.

## Great variability

The speed and ease with which this process takes place will vary hugely from community to community. Some communities already have development forums and community trusts which satisfy the rules. In areas with strong civics or other strong CBOs, it might take six months or less to set up a CBDO.

But other communities may take much more time to establish an appropriate structure. They may require one or two years to reach the stage of a trust. But this cannot be pushed. And it is surely wrong to try to force a community to move faster than it is ready to, or try to dump development on an unprepared community. NGOs and other voluntary agencies should be encouraged to support those communities which are least organised.

The degree of involvement of the community through the Forum and CBDO will also vary considerably. School building will ultimately be the responsibility of the local council. Some Forums may feel their role should be limited to helping choose a site and putting pressure on the council to move faster. Others may feel that the Trust or community company should actually build the school, and may perhaps try to raise additional funds to add adult education facilities or a community hall. Similarly, some communities may wish to build their own roads — perhaps as part of a public works or job creation scheme, while others may feel the council should do it.

## Where forums of trusts are inappropriate

This model cannot be the only one. The structure will be too elaborate for some things. Beneficiary-based committees may be more suitable in

some instances. For example, rural water committees might be best composed of local water users — mainly local women.

Some communities may feel that they already have too many committees, and will want to work through existing ones even though they do not fit the rules precisely. This must be accepted so long as they are seen locally as representative. Certain kinds of projects, such as large greenfield housing developments, may be too large for a single forum and CBDO, because they affect several communities. In that case, it may be necessary to work through compacts, or for the relevant forums and CBDOs to come together to form a larger community development company.

We must accept that many people are desperately busy simply trying to earn enough to survive. Even an active and militant community may prefer to let a big national contractor build the houses with community monitoring, rather than to take the time to do the project themselves. This is a reasonable choice — if community control is taken seriously.

But it can also be very divisive. A warlord or a private developer may offer to put houses on the ground fast, and this may slit the community.

Several people told the Commission that it is faster (albeit less equitable) to dispense money




through NGOs, consultants, universities and other gatekeepers, and communities may wish to do this. But the experience of the IDT drought relief development programme suggests that putting money through gatekeepers is not, in fact, any faster.

Finally, we must return to the insistence that local government provides basic services. This cannot be conditional on any form of community organisation. Rubbish must be collected whether or not there is a forum; schools cannot require that parents form a committee. ★

# What went wrong in Natal?

## *Overcoming the obstacles and moving forward*

**by Blade Nzimande**

This paper does not analyse the election results and patterns of voting in Natal. It is, rather, a broad political reflection aimed at providing a basis for our own critical assessment of the elections in Natal. Its aim is also to contribute towards strategic discussions on how to deal with the post-election political situation in the province. It is important to point out that, in order to arrive at a fuller picture of what actually happened in Natal and to fully assess the situation, it will be necessary for the Alliance to undertake a detailed analysis of area-by-area polling results. This falls outside the scope of this paper.

The Natal election results are a bitter lesson on parliamentary elections. That is to say, the results of an election are not necessarily an expression of one's actual support on the ground. Conversely, one's support on the ground is not automatically translated into electoral strength.

**The overwhelming national electoral victory of the ANC-led alliance was not replicated in two of the nine provinces. In Natal, Inkatha won the election. Much of Inkatha's success can be attributed to fraud. But it would be wrong simply to console ourselves with this, argues Blade Nzimande in a paper that formed the basis for post-election Tripartite assessments of the situation in the Natal province.**

The situation we are faced with in the province is that Inkatha has won the elections and is now the majority party in government. This gives the IFP political legitimacy such as it has never had before. Inkatha's victory will probably go

down as one of the largest frauds in the history of elections in our country, but the capacity of the IFP to embark on such large-scale rigging is not unrelated to our own subjective weaknesses in the province which will be highlighted below. It is for this reason that the ANC's defeat in Natal cannot be simplistically reduced to the rigging of the election.

Perhaps what is most significant about Inkatha is that it is the only political formation, among several that represented the interests of the bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie and that collaborated with the apartheid regime over the years, that has survived the April elections. The rest of the collaborating petty bourgeois political formations in the various bantustan and tricameral systems have been completely wiped out. This means that in Natal, we will be faced with a dominant party in government that will attempt to continue to preserve as much of the old order as possible. The structures of apartheid have provided its best instruments for consolidating power.

The strategy of the IFP, in alliance with the Natal National Party and the white right-wing, will be to push for federalism in Natal. This project is, however, being significantly undermined by the increasingly non-partisan role the Zulu king is assuming in the post-election period. The IFP will continue to try to prevent the ANC from broadening its mass-base, particularly in the rural areas. At the centre of this strategy will be the IFP's attempts to spread its patronage networks as a means of securing a firmer political base for itself. The possibility, therefore, is that violence is not going to disappear overnight in Natal. It is not inconceivable that the IFP will try to use violence to prevent the ANC from spreading its organisation into the rural areas.

Given the above situation, the needs of the majority of the people will be neglected by the IFP. It is a party of a small elite, serving the interests of privileged sectors of society and an aspirant Zulu bourgeoisie.

Perhaps the most critical change in the post-election period is that we are in both the national parliament (as a majority party) and in the provincial assembly (as a minority party). Hence, we cannot embark on strategies of boycotting the establishment institutions, as we have done before, when trying to deal with the problems facing us in the province.

It is clear that the next five years will be characterised by intense struggles both inside and outside parliament. The conflict over the question of the provincial capital for Natal is in fact a forerunner of some of the struggles likely to take place in the province.

## Our weaknesses in the election campaign

Our weaknesses started with the process of drawing up a list of candidates for parliament. There was no strategic discussion around the question of strengthening the organisation. Instead, the list process may

well have contributed to the weakening of our organisation, because there was no discussion on how best to deploy our leadership and cadreship both inside and outside parliament.

One of our main weaknesses in Natal was our failure to penetrate the rural areas. Where we are poorly organised, we were not able to deliver the vote. However, our failure to penetrate the rural areas is also a reflection of an objective disadvantage the Alliance faces in Natal: the difficulties of organising in a province which has been racked by violence. These difficulties made it almost impossible to organise in areas where the chiefs were explicitly aligned to the IFP. The slaughter of our election workers in Ulundi on the eve of the election is a grim example of this reality. In a sense, this means that low-intensity warfare succeeded for the enemy and ultimately delivered the vote to the IFP by virtue of our absence in most of Natal's rural areas. The IFP was able to deploy the state apparatuses of the KwaZulu administration to deliver a vote for itself, no matter how fraudulently.

**Where we were poorly organised we couldn't deliver the vote**

The flip-side of our weakness in the rural areas was our over-reliance on our strength in the urban areas. This over-reliance led to a level of complacency and, as a result, we did not put in as much work as was needed in the urban areas. The fact that only 1,1 million people voted for the ANC requires much internal examination on our capacity to deliver our supporters to the voting stations in the urban areas. There are also indications that as many as 500,000 of our supporters did not cast their votes in the urban areas, although we still need to investigate whether this is true. Is it perhaps a result of votes that might not have been counted by the Independent Electoral Commission in Natal?

Perhaps our most serious subjective weakness — one which could singularly have contributed to our defeat — is the existence of three ANC Natal regions (Southern Natal, Northern Natal, and Natal Midlands) with distinctly different approaches to dealing with the violence in the province. These differences overflowed into the approach to the elections. Consequently, and even more seriously, we failed to work together as a province. It was this lack of unity that prevented us from approaching the elections in a united way, whilst a strong opposition was united in its goal of preventing the ANC from winning in the province. It could also be argued that were we able to work together as a province, we could even have anticipated and thereby minimised the impact of

Inkatha's rigging. In a sense, the strategy of the enemy to weaken us through violence succeeded in dividing the three regions on the issue of how to deal with the violence. The regions' differences on this issue also reflected themselves within some of our branches, leading to debilitating internal conflicts.

The double ballot also had an effect, particularly in relation to white voters. There are very clear indications that a significant number of National Party supporters voted for the National Party at the national level and the IFP at provincial level. This was partly as a result of the fact that, despite the widening political gap between the National Party and the IFP nationally, the Natal NP and IFP leadership are quite close.

This section can only be concluded by criticising the notion that the election result in Natal was an expression of the so-called "Nicaraguan option" — people voting for peace by voting IFP. This notion is a rather dangerous oversimplification of the situation in Natal, and in fact indicates a naivete about the real dynamics on the ground in this province. This argument is countered by the fact that a significant proportion of the areas where our supporters voted ANC in large numbers were, precisely, areas that have experienced some of the worst violence, in some instances right up to the eve of the elections. Among examples I would cite Port Shepstone; areas around Hammarsdale; sections of Richmond; and sections of Vulindlela near Pietermaritzburg. It was in areas where we failed to penetrate organisationally that we did very badly. In those rural areas where we had an organisational presence, we were able to deliver the vote. Even if one were to concede that there were instances of the so-called "Nicaraguan option", this can definitely not account for our defeat in Natal.

## Our reaction to defeat

Understandably, we received the election results with shock. But we have hardly been able to go beyond this. We have not given adequate guidance to the mass of our members and the people in general. If we fail to correct this, the consequences of this will be a growing gulf between the mass-base of the ANC and the parliamentary representatives of our movement. Even more serious is that this might severely hamper the implementation of the RDP in the province.

Our immediate reaction to the defeat in Natal reflected the extent of the shock. On the one side was an immediate temptation to accept the results without adequately addressing the issue of how to deal with the restiveness of our support base, particularly on the issue of the fraudulent nature of the IFP victory. On the other side, there was a temptation to disrupt or boycott the new parliament without fully taking into account the political consequences of such action and how it would throw us into deeper contradictions as a movement that participated in the elections and is participating in all

the emerging structures of government nationally. At least we have managed to overcome this.

Taking the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to court was, in a way, a compromise position between these two strands of thinking. The fact that this route has now been dropped (despite the fact that we have evidence of massive fraud) could be seen as proof that this was a compromise route suggested before the ANC took stock of the situation in the interests of peace and stability in the province.

**The best way to lose subsequent elections is to demobilise your structures on the ground**

A weakness in our response to the post-election situation has been a glaring lack of coordination between national and provincial leadership in dealing with the issue of the defeat in Natal. One example of this is the fact that, whilst the IFP has been pressurising us to give it key positions in the national cabinet (and indeed it has succeeded!), it has treated us with contempt in Natal in the allocation of MEC portfolios. Had we coordinated national and provincial action on the issue of the allocation of portfolios, we could have effectively used our national strength to bargain for key portfolios in the province.

Lack of visible coordination with our national structures has tended to fuel the highly damaging speculation, both within and outside our ranks, that the ANC head office has sacrificed Natal as an act of appeasement to the IFP in order to secure peace in the province. At least there is one positive outcome of this, namely that the national and provincial leadership of the ANC have arrived at a common position and approach on how to deal with the election results in Natal.

A potential danger that must be combatted right from the onset is the division that seems to be emerging between the parliamentary and political structures of the ANC. This goes against our very own strategic thinking on our approach to the national liberation struggle and the next five years in particular. Experiences of revolutionary movements throughout the world show that the best way to lose a subsequent election is to completely demobilise political structures of the movement, and rely exclusively on bureaucratic and parliamentary institutions.

In order to chart the way forward, it is important to briefly outline the strengths and weaknesses of both the IFP and ANC in Natal. It is important to debate and analyse these as a basis for our strategy and tactics in the province over the next five years.

## IFP strengths

The fact that the IFP is now the

dominant party in the Natal provincial government gives it enormous institutional power and legitimacy, such as it has never had before. The second strength of the IFP is its historical control of the countryside through a combination of Zulu tribalism, patronage and repression, coupled with its past total control over the KwaZulu Police (KZP). Related to this is the IFP's historical control over the majority of the chiefs, even though this has been primarily through patronage and terror. The IFP will continue to use its control over provincial government to secure its control over the chiefs.

The third strength of the IFP is that it has controlled the KwaZulu bantustan state apparatuses, thereby placing it in an incredibly advantageous position to manipulate emerging state structures in the province. Already, the IFP's approach to the merging of the former apartheid structures is that of absorbing them into the KwaZulu Government (KZG) structures. Furthermore, there is an historical collaborative relationship between the KZG and the Natal Provincial Administration through the Joint Executive Authority.

## IFP weaknesses

The first and major weakness of the IFP is that it has no viable economic and development programme for the province. Its victory seems to have come as a surprise even to itself, and it has not prepared to govern. Secondly, its history of collaboration with the apartheid regime could still lead to new and potentially damaging revelations.

The third weakness of the IFP is its lack of experience in democratic organisation and its dependence on patronage, repression and violence for its reproduction as a political force in the province.

The IFP's fourth and most potentially devastating weakness is the possible rift between the king and Buthelezi, which would lay the basis for undermining Inkatha's use of the Zulu king to advance tribal, even secessionist, tendencies. This potentially deprives the IFP of one of its most powerful weapons, a weapon that has been used devastatingly to justify violence against the ANC in the province. With the king increasingly acting in a non-partisan way, this seriously deprives Buthelezi and the IFP of their claim to being the political custodians of the "Zulu nation". This even threatens the political and ideological coherence of the IFP.

Lastly, a potential weakness of the IFP is the "absence" of Buthelezi on a day-to-day basis in the province. Over and above this, he is locked into the political "logistics" of the government of national unity. The fact that he is a member of the national cabinet limits his ability to undermine it. Buthelezi's position arises out of his decision to head his party's national list rather than standing as premier for Natal. This serious miscalculation was aimed at avoiding an embarrassment to Buthelezi should the IFP have lost in Natal. Buthelezi's physical absence from Natal does not, however, detract from the fact that his primary preoc-

cupation is still with Natal. Actually, all evidence points to the fact that he is manipulating the situation behind the scenes.

In a recent IFP victory rally in Durban, he arrogantly announced that it was not Mdlalose who won the election but himself! Our task, therefore, in Natal, is to ensure that Buthelezi is not allowed to run the province through "remote control". Strategically, he must be contained and tied to the concept of a government of national unity by virtue of being a minister in the national cabinet.

**IFP weaknesses are not automatically our strengths**

In noting these weaknesses we should remember one important lesson from our experience in the elections: the IFP's weaknesses are not automatically our strengths. We need to consciously and strategically transform these into our strengths.

## ANC strengths

Since the weaknesses of the ANC have already been discussed above, I will not go into them again. I will simply deal with our strengths.

The ANC and the Alliance as a whole have a history of democratic organisation in the large urban and peri-urban areas. This places us in an advantageous position if this support and experience is translated into winning elections to local government in key cities and towns of Natal, making it impossible for the IFP to impose its agenda without having to negotiate with powerful local authorities in economically decisive centres of Natal. The strength of our ally, COSATU, in the organised labour movement in the major industrial centres of Natal places us in a very powerful position.

Our strength also lies in the fact that the ANC is the dominant party in the government of national unity. The ANC has a clear programme for reconstruction and development (the RDP), which is now a government programme. This places us in a strategic position to counter the IFP and present a coherent programme to the people of Natal. This is our major strength and a powerful weapon with which to advance our struggles in the province.

## Strategy, tactics and the way forward

Our most important strategic objective in the province for the next five years should be the implementation of the RDP. Of course, we should be under no illusion. In our struggle for the implementation of the RDP, the IFP and its allies will present a serious obstacle. Despite their rhetorical commitment to the RDP, they are likely to undermine or hamper the

introduction of the programme.

However, the strategies of the IFP to block the RDP will not be without their own contradictions, the foremost of which will be the fact that the IFP has publicly, no matter how rhetorically and grudgingly, committed itself to the RDP. We can hold them to this in our struggles. The second contradiction is that failure to implement even some of the basic aspects of the RDP will cost the IFP politically, as there can be no improvement to the lives of the people without the full implementation of the RDP.

The most critical issue that will face us will be how to advance the implementation of key aspects of the RDP without at the same time giving credit to the IFP for such achievements. To overcome this potential contradiction, we will have to involve an ever widening base of the mass of our people both in our strategic thinking and in opening up the frontiers for implementing the RDP.

Another key challenge facing us is to prepare for a resounding victory in local government elections in strategic centres in the province. It is crucial that we develop a strategy to penetrate the rural areas organisationally, at the same time dealing with the potentially violent reaction from Inkatha and its attempts to use the provincial state apparatuses to advance IFP goals.

We must use the space created by the existence of a government of provincial unity to advance our strategic objectives. At the same time, we should not undermine that government in a manner that we would not like other parties to do to us at national level. This reflects the contradictory character embodied in the government of national unity, and in fact, this is the sharpest contradiction facing the ANC and the Alliance in provinces like the Western Cape and Natal.

The most crucial challenge facing us in Natal in the next five years will be to bring an end to political violence. The prerequisite for this will be to critically review our past strategy towards dealing with violence, assessing whether in the new conditions we need to develop new strategies to bring the violence to an end. Already, there have been some overtures by the IFP towards us, and since we are now in the government of national unity, we are forced to work together with Inkatha in a manner that we have not done before. The key question here is what does all this mean for our strategy of engaging the IFP and dealing with violence in the region and the province as a whole?

We need to seriously contest the loyalties of, primarily, the bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie in Natal. Most importantly, we need to struggle for the transformation of the institution of chieftaincy from being an appendage of the IFP to an institution that acts in the interests of the people as a whole. This represents the most crucial challenge in our attempts to penetrate and transform relations of power in the countryside. The new situation already

holds within it the potential for breaking the old relations between the KwaZulu bantustan and the chiefs. This should be regarded as one of the primary, though least emphasised, facets of the Reconstruction and Development Programme, that is, the transformation and democratisation of the state and all the relations embodied in the social relations of apartheid and colonialism of a special type. In doing this, serious reflection and analysis is needed on what has enabled us to successfully penetrate some of the rural areas.

One of the most critical questions requiring clarification and consensus within our own ranks is whether or not we are an opposition in Natal. There is still a fundamental contradiction between us and the IFP and its allies. Yet at the same time, because of the government of national unity, the current situation means that at the institutional level, we are not an opposition party in parliament. Our strategic orientation in this regard should be to ensure that national and popular programmes are implemented at provincial level. The political stances we take should be informed by the extent to which they advance or undermine the implementation of the RDP. In other words, we are both an opposition and a part of the government of national unity in the province; and at national level, we are formally the dominant party in government. This presents us with a uniquely complex situation. ★

The Eritrean liberation struggle was one of the most notable victims of Cold War thinking. From the middle 1970s through the 1980s the Eritrean liberation movement was more or less ignored, if not actively cold-shouldered, by progressive forces on our continent (including the ANC and SACP) on the grounds that it was fighting against a "socialist" and Soviet-aligned Ethiopia. After one of the longest armed struggles in Africa, the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front finally defeated the Ethiopian army of occupation in May 1991. Eritrea is now an internationally recognised state, embarking on a process of reconstruction and development. In the spirit of acknowledging our own past errors, we publish this account as a tribute to the heroic Eritrean struggle.

**Dan Connell**, the author, is the founder of Grassroots International, a Boston-based development agency that supports progressive social movements in Eritrea and other Third World countries. He is also the author of a new book, *Against All Odds: A Chronicle of the Eritrean Revolution*

# Eritrea: A revolution in process

In April 23-25 1993 more than a million Eritreans in thirty-six countries joined together to exercise their long-denied right to self-determination. The UN-monitored referendum asked Eritreans whether they wished to form a sovereign state.

To no one's surprise, they voted to separate from Ethiopia, formalising the de facto independence they have enjoyed since defeating the Ethiopian Army in Eritrea in May 1991. But the sheer size of the lop-sided vote and the manner in which it was conducted underlined both the extraordinary popular unity achieved by the Eritreans in their long liberation struggle and the unbending determination that drove them to carry it through to the end. The plebiscite was also a strong sig-

nal of the movement's commitment to popular democracy on its own terms.

The final tally showed 99.8 percent of those voting favoring independence. Over 98.5 percent of those registered during the year leading up to the referendum cast ballots. On April 27, Isaias Afwerki, the Secretary General of Eritrea's provisional government, declared Eritrea "a sovereign country. Ethiopia's Information Minister, Negasso Gidada, made an impassioned speech in the Eritrean capital saluting the outcome of the referendum and calling for close cooperation between the two peoples in the future.

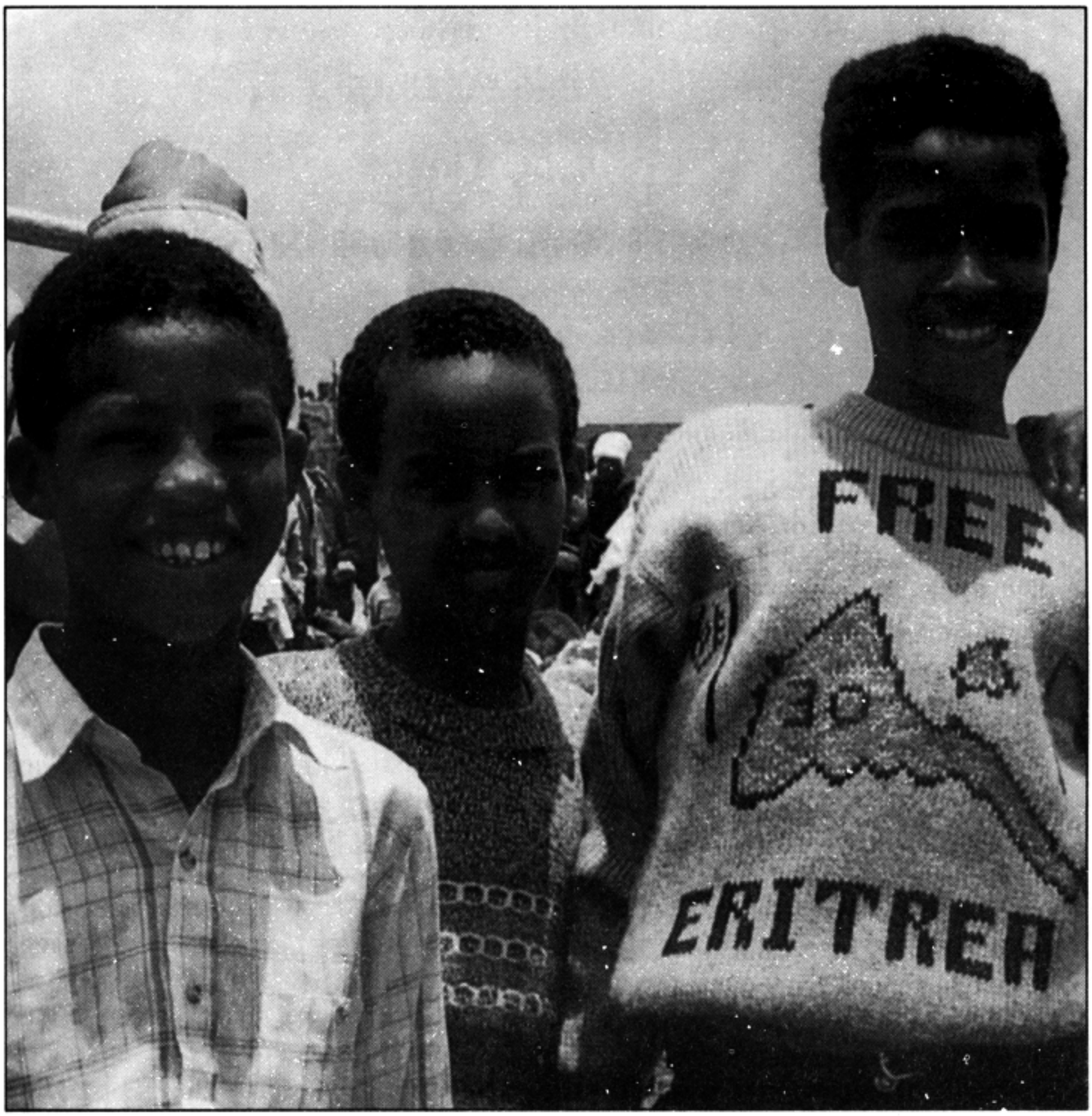
These events capped a bitter thirty-year war — Africa's longest — that saw both the United States and the Soviet Union intervene against the Eritreans before they finally achieved their stunning victory. This is the first successful popular revolution of the 1990s. It brings with it profoundly important lessons for future social struggles, though its main value may be that it demonstrates what is possible in this otherwise discouraging era.

The Eritrean experience has a number of characteristics that sharply distinguish it from other nationalist struggles, not the least of which are the trials and challenges which the movement has been forced to confront over the past quarter century. It may be, however, that the recognition of this very particularity is Eritrea's most enduring legacy.

## The Struggle for Independence

Ethiopa annexed Eritrea in 1962, abrogating a UN-sponsored federation engineered by the United States in order to acquire military bases on the Red Sea and in the Eritrean highlands. The Kagnew Station complex in Asmara became Washington's largest overseas spy base, a listening post for the Middle East, the southern Soviet Union, and all of Africa, as well as a critical relay station in a pre-satellite global communications network. Once the war got underway, the United States and Israel teamed up to provide sophisticated counter-insurgency support to the Ethiopians. In 1964, Lyndon Johnson sent a team of Green Berets to Ethiopia and introduced the first supersonic fighter jets to a black African battlefield. Two years later, Israel had a 100-man military training mission there. From 1946 through 1975, more than two-thirds of US military assistance to Africa went to Ethiopia, but it was not enough to stem the revolt, not even to keep the aging Ethiopian emperor in power.

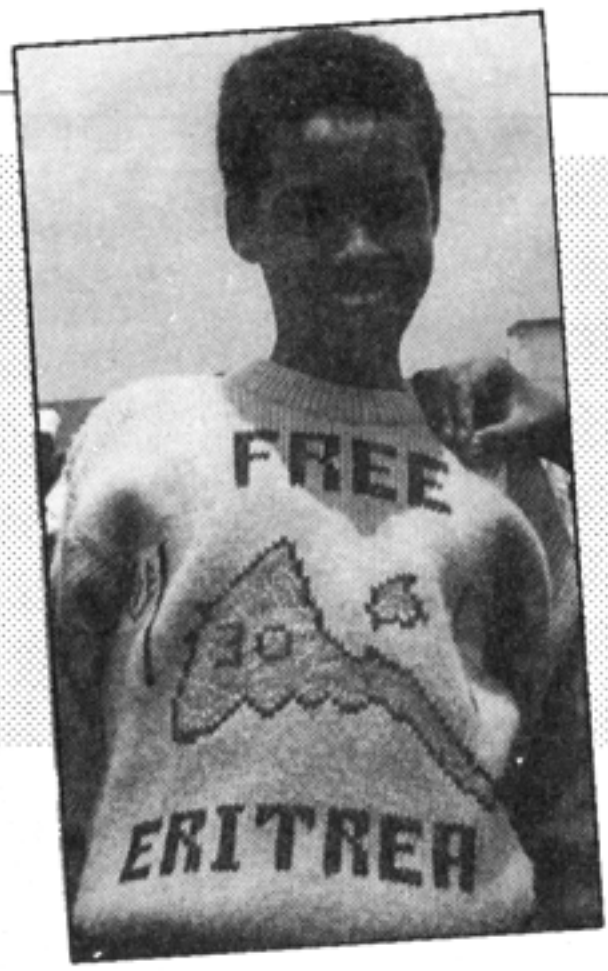
In September 1974 a military committee known as the Derg (Amharic for committee) deposed Haile Selassie and declared Ethiopia to be a "socialist" state. It took eighteen months to sort out the leadership of the Ethiopian revolution, during which the United States continued to support the junta. During that time the Eritreans captured nearly all of their country, and neighbouring




**Eritrea, after 30 years, free at last**

Somalia invaded southeastern Ethiopia on the grounds of irredentist claims to the Somali-populated Ogaden region. In early 1977, after a series of bloody shootouts, Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam emerged as the Derg's unchallenged leader and promptly realigned Ethiopia with the Soviet Union, triggering a bizarre geopolitical rotation in the region.

Somalia, once touted as the leading example of socialist-oriented development in Africa, became a US client and Ethiopia became the Soviet Union's primary ally. Within a




# Until recently, caught in the Cold War crossfire

year, Soviet advisers, Cuban troops, and billions of dollars in new arms were flowing into Ethiopia. The upshot was a smashing Somali defeat and an Eritrean retreat from previously captured towns and cities back to the mountains, where the war ground to a stalemate that lasted almost a decade.

During this time the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) withstood several massive military offensives involving over 100 000 Ethiopian troops and a seemingly endless supply of sophisticated armaments, while fighting almost entirely with captured weapons. The front's main source of financial support was the Eritrean exile community, which was highly organised throughout the Middle East, Europe, and North America. After achieving parity in the mid-1980s and surviving a devastating drought and famine, the EPLF turned the tables in 1988 and surrounded Ethiopian forces in a handful of large towns in the central highlands. Over the next three years, the Eritreans tightened the noose until they defeated the Ethiopians in May 1991 and ended the war.

The events surrounding Eritrea's independence placed the country, ever so briefly, in the international spotlight after a virtual blackout that had prevailed since Washington and Moscow abruptly traded places. Many pro-Soviet states and movements had supported the Eritreans, some with material aid, prior to the regional realignment, though the Soviet Union itself never provided any direct assistance. China gave the Eritreans training and modest assistance in the 1960s but broke it off when Selassie recognised the Beijing government in 1970. At the time of the superpower switch, most of the outside world — including the international left — consigned the Eritreans to an historical footnote, assuming that without the support of one or the other global power they could not survive, let alone win. Many on the left, following the Soviet lead, withdrew their support for the Eritreans, arguing that in a bipolar world this maverick liberation front could only serve the interests of imperialism and was now an unwelcome obstacle to the much-

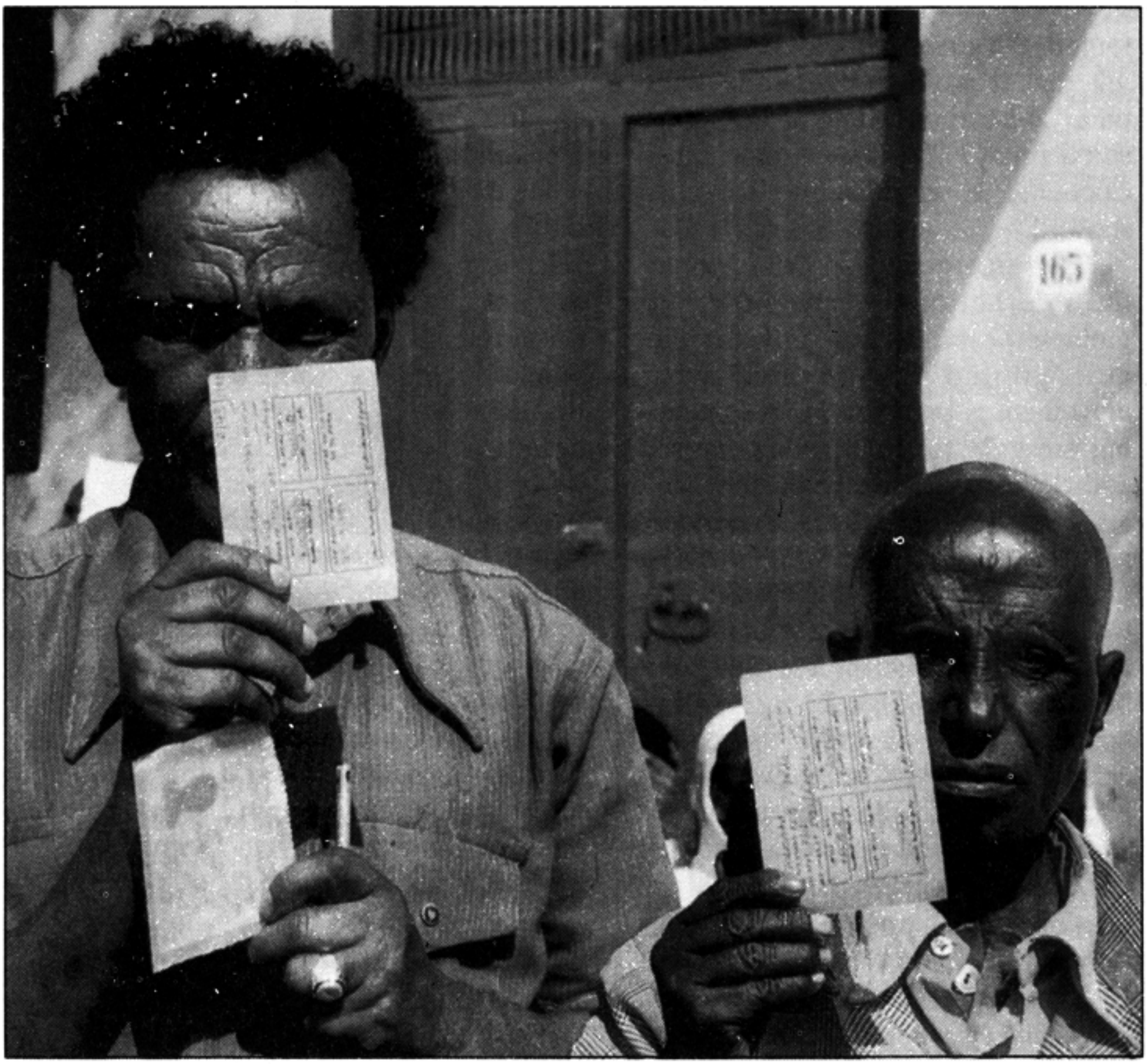
touted Ethiopian revolution. Some felt that it would either fade with time or be reduced to a US-sponsored proxy. These were gross miscalculations, as subsequent events showed.

The emergence of Eritrea onto the international scene now has great importance not only for the new ground this revolutionary movement is breaking in its continuing struggle to unify, democratise, and develop its diverse society, but also for the hard lessons imbedded in its history for those who so badly misunderstood and misrepresented this remarkable liberation movement. It is not that Eritrea can now become the new model for revolutionary struggle. Certainly the political upheavals and setbacks of the past decade elsewhere have demonstrated how foolish that is. But the Eritreans have shown that with a deep grasp of one's own circumstances, flexible tactics, high levels of popular organisation, and inspired leadership, it is possible for a movement animated by commitments to egalitarian values and social justice to overcome enormous odds, not only on the battlefield but in the complex domestic and international political arenas in which this struggle was also contested. Not since the 1940s in China has there been such a victory under such conditions by progressive nationalist forces in the formerly colonised world.

For three decades the Eritreans waged an armed political revolution to establish an independent state. For much of that time, they conducted a social revolution to recast their nation into a more unified, egalitarian, and just one. In 1991 they won the political battle. Whether and to what extent they "won" the social battle is more difficult to assess. What is abundantly clear in the aftermath of the Cold War is that there is no single event or milestone that would confirm "victory" in this battle; there are no reliable checklists against which to measure it; and the process is an ongoing one. A social revolution has to be evaluated not on the bases of how close it mimics a previous historical phenomenon or resembles an abstract paradigm, but in terms of how much and in what ways it transforms a particular society. The key measures will be embedded in the history and the culture of that society, not in the external idea. In these terms, the Eritreans have achieved a great deal.

## The New Nation

When I arrived in the Eritrean capital, Asmara, five months after liberation in October 1991, the Ertitreans were still celebrating, though they were already engaged in the enormous challenge of constructing Africa's newest nation-state out of the ashes of the continent's longest and most brutal armed conflict. In the evenings Asmara's tree-lined boulevards and wide sidewalks were crammed with people strolling from one end of the city to the other. Several times I met people near where I was staying who marvelled at the opportunity to saunter by un-



**April 1993, Eritreans vote for self-determination**

obstructed after two decades of nightly curfews. For thirteen years the street had been off-limits to pedestrians because it ran past the telecommunications office and the government feared an act of sabotage. Towards the end of the occupation, official paranoia became so extreme that many sidewalks were criss-crossed with strings of tin cans that jingled like homemade burglar alarms when anyone touched them, bringing armed guards dashing into the street. Now the cans were gone, along with the barbed wire and the sandbags that had surrounded every government building.

Surprisingly, there were no guns visible — EPLF fighters were required to check their weapons in at police posts on the outskirts of this city of 400,000, and the police didn't

carry weapons at all. Where one might have expected swaggering soldiers gloating over their victory, there were instead modest young men and women shyly exploring the city, most for the first time.

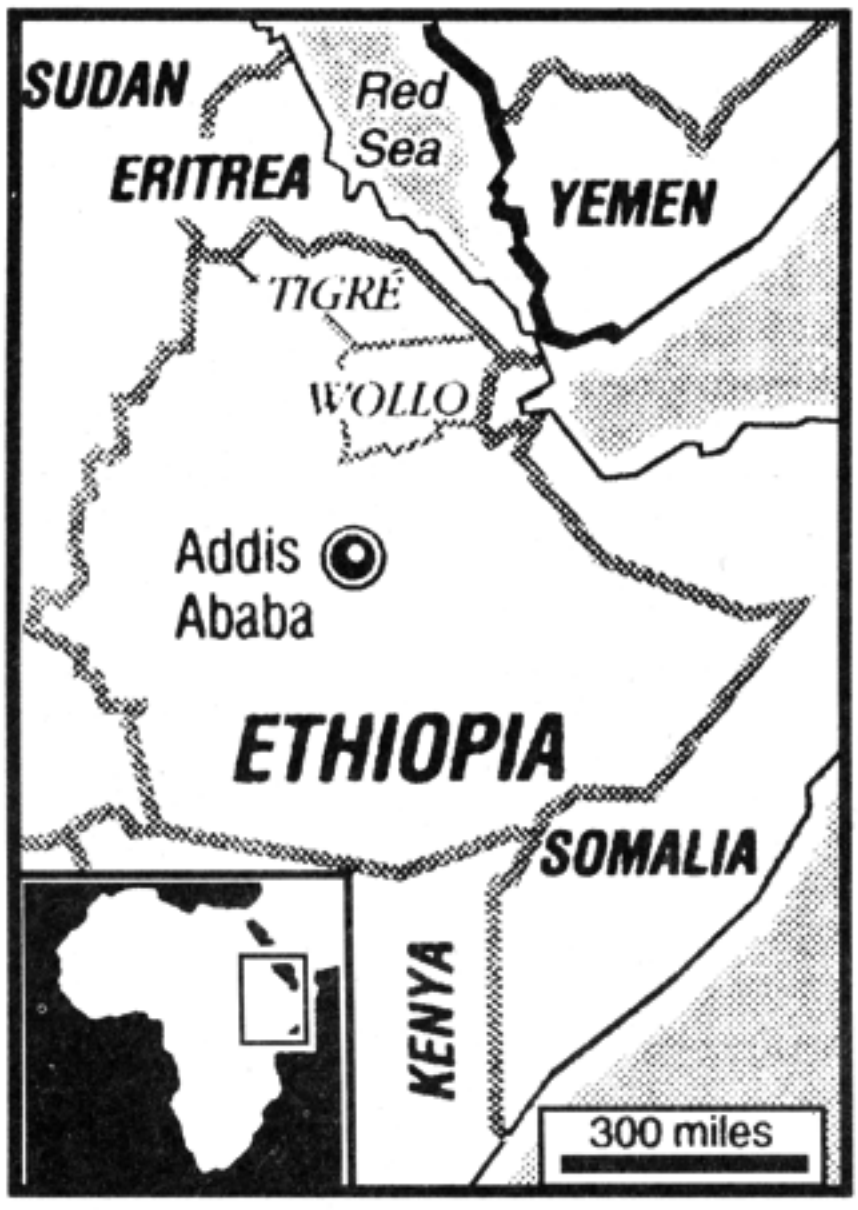
The provisional government's central priorities were the creation of democratic political institutions and the reconstruction of the country's war- and drought-ravaged economy. One of the first tasks was to rebuild the country's infrastructure. To that end, the entire EPLF army would stay on without pay at least until the 1993 referendum. In November 1991 a compulsory "national service" was announced, requiring all citizens between eighteen and forty to register. Those not employed or in school were liable for a call-up of twelve-to-eighteen months. University students were tapped for a rural literacy campaign. Soldiers and draftees were to rebuild roads, terrace hillsides, and construct earthen dams and catchment basins.

Meanwhile, the new government accelerated efforts to attract capital from abroad to regenerate Ertirea's industrial sector. Prospective investors were promised guarantees against uncompensated nationalisation, the right to full repatriation of profits, and a minimum of red tape in setting up businesses or restarting old ones. Most enterprises nationalised by the Ethiopians were targeted for return to their original owners or for sale to new buyers. Well-heeled Eritrean exiles in Europe and North America were urged to come home.

The country's new economic policy would foster the development of a planned and regulated market economy. However, in the first two years the government had difficulties gaining recognition, aid, or investment, due in part to the unresolved status of the territory, but also to the continuing wariness of many industrial countries toward the revolution. Several high-level US and European delegations toured Eritrea after the end of the war, but little came of this. In early February 1992 a team of experts from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) arrived in Asmara. Though relief was stepped up, there was no development aid forthcoming for the entire year.

Negotiations over US assistance broke down when the USAID team presented a rigid formula for privatisation of the conomy. Though such "conditionalities" for US aid had become common practice during the Reagan-Bush years, there had been no warning in the informal contacts the EPLF had made with US officials, and the Eritreans were taken entirely by surprise. As a result, no agreement was reached. During the first full year of peace, Norway was the only country to pledge significant development assistance — estimated at US$20 million — without strings attached.

The drive to attract educated and skilled Eritrean exiles back home stalled over the government's inability to pay market salaries or to assure adequate housing, schools, or other social services. Meanwhile, the gov-




ernment pushed ahead with its civilian organising in order to bring the population in the central cities and towns into the prócess of institution-building that had been underway for years in outlying communitites. Elections were being organised at the local level by the end of 1991, setting the stage for the establishment of provincial legislatures the next year. The local elections were carried out by secret ballot and were hotly contested, with terms of office frequently limited to six months or less to give communities a chance to evaluate their elected officials.

The EPLF's commitment to pluralism was an outgrowth of the front's long experience as a social movement and a shadow government, not the result of external pressure or of radical shifts in the liberation front's underlying values. A key question they confronted in the transition was how to balance the need for growth with their deep-seated commitment to social justice.

## Popular Movements

A signal of the liberation movement's commitment to functional democracy was to be found in the efforts to launch autonomous popular organisations prior to independence. The mass organisations of the front — the National Unions of workers, peasants, women, and youth — were slated for transformation into self-sustaining, nongovernmental organisations. Perhaps the simplest transition was that for the National Union of Eritrean Workers (NUEW), set up during the war to mobilise workers, most of whom were in the occupied towns or abroad as refugees. The organisation's main aim was to support the liberation struggle rather than to advance the particular interests of workers. This was an association based on class position, not a union linked to specific workplaces.

Less than six months after the end of the war, the provisional government set the parameters for independent industry-based trade union organising. The new unions would have the legal right to strike and the right to affiliate with each other to form a national alliance. By the end of 1992 there were over sixty locals in Asmara alone, and plans were underway to hold the founding congress of a labour federation in 1993.

In the case of the National Union

of Eritrean Peasants (NUEP), the provisional government took a different tack, linked to a broad push to decentralise the new state. (In 1992, in order to disperse the seat of bureaucratic power, a decision was taken to move all government offices out of Asmara that did not have to be there.) As the peasants were essentially local in outlook and orientation, the EPLF dismantled the NUEP and reorganised it on a regional basis in each of the nine rural provinces.

For the peasants, the central issue remained land — access to it and tenure on it. What the EPLF did at the national level was to decree that all rural land would remain a public trust while a commission was set up to consider long-term land policy. The effect was to leave most small-plot farmland under community control, preventing it from being bought or sold at a time when post-war poverty could easily have triggered a massive, market-driven land redistribution that would have thoroughly destabilised the society. In an intriguing display of local initiative, the new legistlative assembly in Akele Guzai voted in the autumn of 1992 to carry out land reform throughout that province.

The National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEWmn) did not have to be radically restructured, but it did have to grapple with the redefinition of its mission and with dramatic changes in its membership. The NUEWmn had encouraged women not only to participate in the liberation struggle but to take part in the country's economic and social life for the first time. The union supported women in bitter struggles around marriage reform, ownership of land, and direct participation in the new political institutions. It also taught women literacy, trained them for jobs, and even set up and managed projects. This dual identity — between that of a popular movement and that of a service organisation — always contained an inherent tension. No longer subordinated to the task of national liberation, it took on new force.

Women's union leaders had sparked a heated debate within the male-dominated EPLF Central Committee over the lack of women in the top levels of the provisional government when it was set up in 1991. In a major reshuffle in mid-1992, four women were appointed to head departments, with two sitting on a new Advisory Council, the equivalent of a national cabinet. Despite these changes, some felt the organisation was focused too much on self-improvement through education and training and not enough on direct challenges to institutional oppression.

Some women in the front — invited to join the NUEWmn after the EPLF lifted a twenty-year war-time ban on fighters participating in other political organisations — questioned whether the union could meet their particular needs, accustomed as they were to a far higher degree of gender equality than civilian women. At the same time, the union was inundated with members from the newly

liberated towns — some 45,000 out of a total of 120,000 were residents of Asmara when the union held an organising congress in September 1992. Though filled with nationalist fervour, these women had no direct experience of the revolution and were far less "feminist" in their outlook than their counterparts in the liberated countryside, let alone the highly politicised women fighters. Still, enthusiasm for the continuing struggle for gender equality was strong throughout the newly autonomous union.

The arrival of the rains in 1992 seemed to overshadow everything else for most Eritreans. The hills and valleys around Asmara were radiant with the rich hues of autumn after the strongest, most sustained rains since the late 1970s. The harvest was projected at four times the size of the 1991 crop, though this was still only half what Eritrea needed to feed itself. It would take two or three more good years for the farmers to get back on their feet, but it was an encouraging start, and people were infused with a new sense of hope despite their immediate crushing poverty.

## Economic challenges

The next phase of Eritrea's national development will be marked by new and unfamiliar economic challenges in a largely economic arena far different from the military one in which the EPLF waged the struggle to win independence. Commitments to allocate resources to enhance equity and promote social justice will immediately come under fire from forces like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, Western governments, and private investors with other priorities. At the same time, pressures will build for rapid, measureable improvements from a population that supported the liberation movement in the expectation that victory would change their lives, particularly those returning from exile.

The new government will enter the global economy in a weak position, but there are no alternatives today to doing so. Under these circumstances, it will have to negotiate the best possible short- and medium-term arrangements with investors and lenders and try to improve them once its position strengthens. At least the Eritreans begin with no debts — financial or otherwise.

The EPLF also starts out with considerable political capital at home, not only for winning the war but for the way in which the fighters conducted themselves during and after the conflict. There were few recriminations when the fighting stopped; instead, moves were made to draw non-members into the process of reconstruction and transitional governance. Massive efforts to repair war damage, extend basic services, and rehabilitate the rural economy yielded measurable results within months. Throughout this period, even the acting president, Isaias Afwerki, served without salary.

Now that independence is secured, however, the grace period may not last long — demands from

# The struggle for transition to a developed democracy will continue for years




competing sectors and interests are certain to arise.

## The Movement and the Future

When I met Isaias Afwerki in his modest presidential office in Asmara, I asked him how his views had changed over these long and bitter years to meet the new challenges facing Eritrea. "I am not shy about the ideals I entertained tweny years ago, ten years ago, but now I don't think they work," he said matter-of-factly.

"I still believe that the main problem which has to be solved is the economic and social status of everyone in society, but I think it has to be worked out within the context of a realistic policy. One political party cannot be the solution - this is a very dangerous and risky game. The only alternative is a pluralistic political system, though there are many questions about how this should work. More important than anything else, the state has to be limited in its role and should not be expected to do everything for everybody. We have to abolish this kind of thinking. People talk about class and class struggle, but my impression is that what is damaging Thirld world societies above everything else is corruption. The institutions of government and of the state have been the main cause of these problems."

If any one assumption guided left thinking through the 1970s it was that the seizure of state power by a political vanguard marks the decisive transition to a more advanced level of socioeconomic development. Experience in Eritrea and elsewhere has shown this to be open to question on several counts. Social revolution is not a linear process that moves in only one direction. It can be reversed, leading to conditions worse than those that gave rise to it, or it can be diverted in altogether different directions from those originally anticipated.

"Vanguard" politics in the context of continuing economic and social instability — an inevitable characteristic of all revolutionary projects in

the twentieth century — fosters an ever-widening gap between party and people, justified or excused in the short term by the continued existence of external and internal threats. This leads to increasing resort to repression and coercion in the political sphere and to reliance on undemocratic and opportunistic centralism in the economic sphere. Under these circumstances, the preservation and development of the state, detached from its social base, turns into an end into itself. The result is likely to be a bloated, corrupt, and ineffective bureaucracy that little resembles the people's democratic republic imagined by either its founders or its followers.

In a sharp departure from this model, the EPLF on the eve of independence was striving to whittle down the state while creating a public arena for political and economic struggle that would drive the society forward through a dynamic, continuing creative tension. (In line with these beliefs, at its February 1994 Third Congress, the EPLF formally dissolved and the Popular Front for Democracy and Justice was launched — ed.). The role of the state would be to mediate the struggle and to guarantee the openess of the arena. The state would have to be accountable to the people for its adherence to this mandate. The assumption was that while formal independence in May 1992 marked the end of one era of struggle and sweeping social and political change, the transition to a developed democratic society will contine for years, perhaps decades to come, as Eritrea moves out of its feudal and colonial past into the modern world. Setting the course will be a major focus of contention in the next phase, as political parties and other social formations sort themselves out. ★

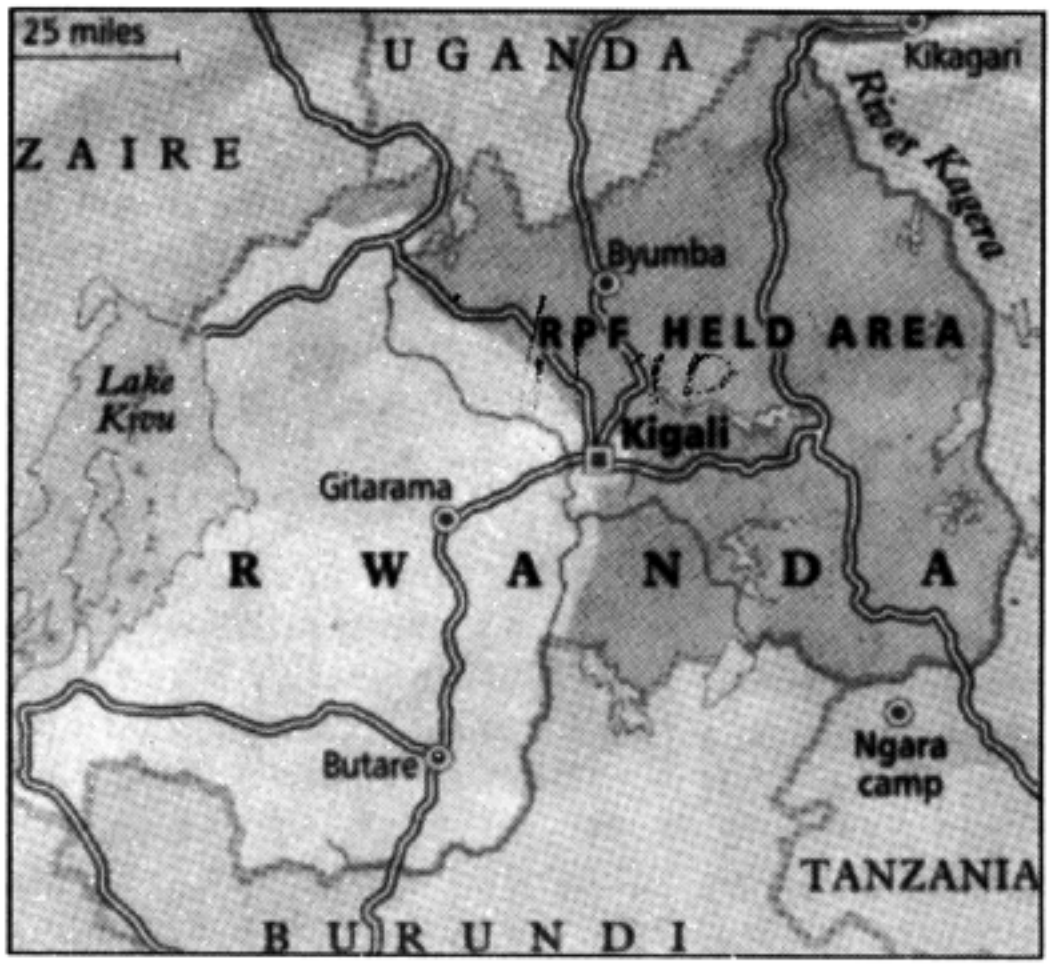


# Rwanda – behind the genocide

**The genocide in Rwanda is being portrayed in many quarters as a "typical" ethnic conflict. The truth is considerably different.**

"The heads of the Tutsis must be cut off and, by means of a highway which is the river Nile, they must be returned to their home in Abyssinia". This call to genocide was uttered in December 1992 by Leon Mugeseras, a central executive member of the ruling MRND party in Rwanda. Mugeseras was, in effect, announcing, with a few months headstart, the tens of thousands of corpses that were soon to be carried by the Akagera river all the way down to Lake Victoria in Uganda.

A staggering half a million people are estimated to have been butchered since April. Yet there are forces trying to camouflage the reality and the truth behind it. According to *The New York Times* (June 10, 1994) the Clinton administration has told its spokespersons not to use the word "genocide" in statements on Rwanda — presumably out of consideration for his Western ally,




France, which has been deeply implicated in supporting the Habyarimana dictatorship. In much of the media the genocide is presented, at least implicitly, as a "typical African inter-ethnic conflict", between Hutus and Tutsis. For viewers of SATV news programmes an impression is given of a struggle between two ethnic and more or less equally guilty sides, the Kigali government forces and the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF).

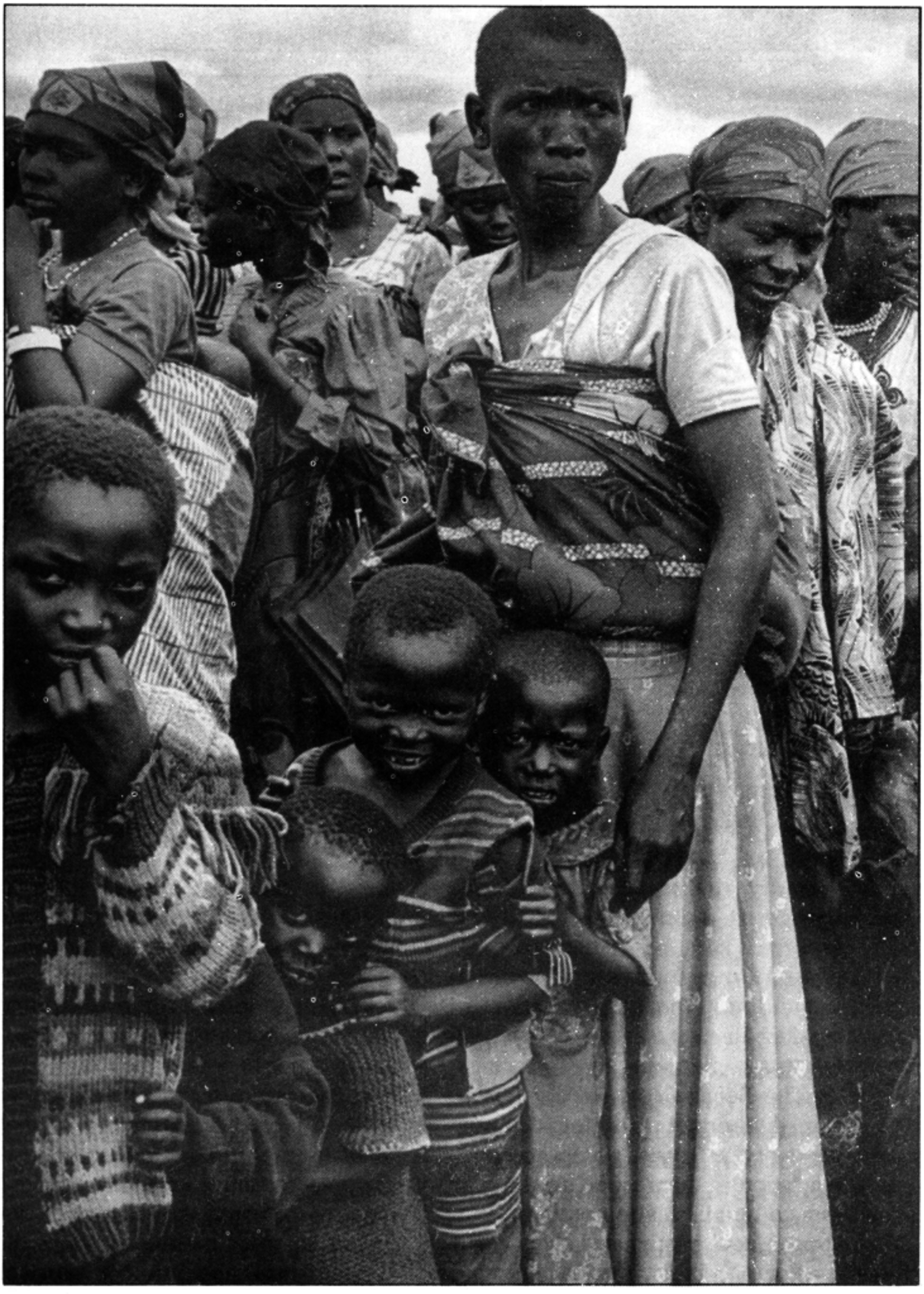
The facts are considerably different. Certainly the victims of the genocide are mainly Tutsis. But Hutu opponents of the dictatorship have also been slaughtered in large numbers. The immediate cause of the killings was the April 6 shooting down, by Hutu extremists, of the jet carrying Habyarimana and his Burundi counterpart. This sparked a round of killings of Tutsi and Hutu political opponents of the regime. But it quickly spilled over into the mass killings of Tutsis. The perpetrators of the genocide are the government militia, presenting themselves as the armed wing "of spontaneous popular anger", and hiding behind the myth of "inter-ethnic" conflict.

The RPF, while originally dominated by Tutsis (they constituted the great bulk of the exiled Rwandan community that had fled from the dictatorship), is studiously patriotic. It is not ethnic either in its programme or conduct. The RPF is certainly not an equally guilty partner in the genocide.

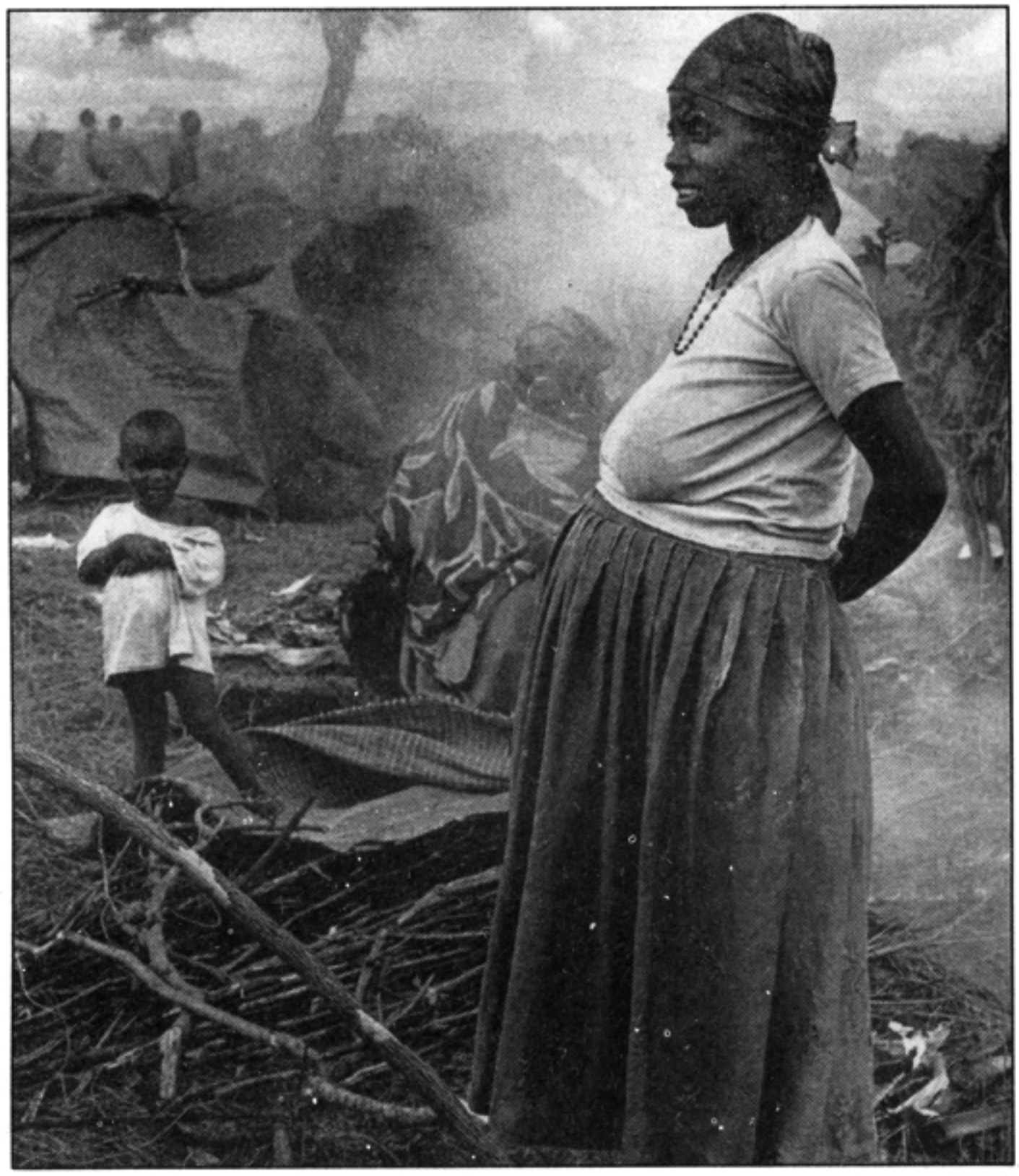
## Colonial racism

The racialisation of the Hutu and Tutsi relationship goes back to the colonial period. The relationship between the two groups was, in pre-colonial times, essentially a feudal social division of overlordship, without any racial connotation. In the words of the political programme of the RPF, adopted in 1992: "The nouns Hutu, Tutsi, Twa had a social rather than an ethnic connotation."

Playing the old colonial strategy of divide and rule, the German and then Belgian colonisers exploited pre-existing social inequalities. To this end the colonisers conferred on an elite of the Tutsi minority (largely pastoralists and with whom the reigning royal family was linked at the time) the role of local colonial collaborators. But the colonialists also invented a whole ethnic/racial discourse to justify this role. The Hutus were defined as Bantu peoples, the Tutsis as "Abyssinians", sup-



**Rwandan refugees queue for food at a camp in Tanzania**



**A refugee camp in Tanzania. Many thousands have fled to escape the carnage**

posedly distant cousins of the Europeans. Although both the Hutus and the Tutsis spoke the same language (Kinvarwanda) and had a similar culture, the colonialists constructed them into "ethnically/racially" distinct plebeians and aristocrats.

The Belgian colonial administration deliberately privileged a segment of the Tutsis, giving access to education to them alone. In this way the colonialists attempted to construct a new westernised elite.

It was against this background that, at the end of the 1950s, the first Rwandan political parties were formed. They were formed by both Hutu and Tutsi elites, and were based on an ethnic and regionalist basis.

Corrupt elites on both sides sought to mobilise an ethnic following in order to secure their own narrow interests. After independence in 1962, under the leadership of the MDR-Parmehutu — a Hutu elitist party — the new Rwandan government perpetuated the strategy of dividing in order to rule. A series of "ethnic" massacres, and a massive flight of refugees (mainly, but not only, Tutsis) ensued.

## Military dictatorship

These internal struggles culminated in a military coup by general Habyarimana in 1975, followed by the creation of a single party, the MNRD. Amongst other things, the coup marked a shift in power from a southern based Hutu clique to a northern based Hutu clique. Not only did this regime continue the previous politics of division, but it systemised this politics, carrying it to new heights. The regime was presided over by the military dictator, Habyarimana, whose family clan was elevated into the incarnation of "Rwandan" racial and cultural purity. Political and administrative functions were monopolised on a clan basis. The command structure of the army was dominated overwhelmingly by officers from the same region as Habyarimana. Identity documents had to indicate not just "ethnicity" — a practice introduced in colonial times — but also the holder's region of origin. Under the dictatorship, a Hutu from the north (Habyarimana's place of origin) was more of a citizen than a southern Hutu.

In perpetuating this system, the Rwandan dictatorship enjoyed international support from, amongst others, the French government (which came to its rescue militarily in 1990 and 1992/3). Another notable supporter of this odious dictatorship was the apartheid regime in Pretoria, which supplied arms and military advisors, and also used Rwanda as a supply line for arms to Savimbi.

In October 1990, forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Front invaded from neighbouring Uganda. At the request of Habyramina, Belgian, French and US-backed Zairean troops came to the aid of the dictatorship (supposedly to protect foreigners and to secure the Kigali airport). The French troops, in particular, were persistently accused of siding with the regime against the rebels. In February 1992, lieutenant colonel Chollet, commander of the French forces in Rwanda, was reported to have been appointed military adviser to the president and his army chief-of-staff. French forces were accused of fighting alongside Rwandan troops in a battle with the RPF near Ruhengeri in February 1993.

During peace talks in Tanzania in March 1993, the RPF insisted on the withdrawal of French forces. The French, for their part, backed by France, Belgium and the United States, called for the RPF to withdraw from territories liberated in the February fighting.

In the past weeks, the RPF has steadily liberated nearly half of Rwandan territory. As we go to press, French forces have once more been deployed into the country with a narrow UN Security Council endorsement. Understandably, the RPF is highy suspicious of the motivation behind the deployment. The record of the West and of the United Nations in Rwanda is bad. A conflict that they like to present as a "typical African ethnic struggle" is, if anything, the result of their own cynicism and manipulation. ★

# *Letter from Moscow*

# Has it all collapsed?

I recently spent several weeks in South Africa, in the course of which I had discussions with many political leaders on the situation in SA and in Russia, on the prospects of relations between our countries, and on their place in the world. I was deeply struck by the lack of objective information on Russia among South Africans, which has resulted in an unreasonably gloomy picture of the real nature of developments in my country.

This not only affects traditionally warm relations between our countries and peoples, but might also influence the new SA government's vision of world affairs. The main assumptions I encountered in SA were: "the West has won the Cold War", "the USSR has collapsed", "socialism has also collapsed". Are they really correct?

## The USSR

While the disintegration of the Soviet Union might be a reality in form, is it the case in substance? In fact the Union of Soviet Republics, formally speaking, did not collapse but was dismantled by decree from on high. On March 17 1991, 76% of 280 million citizens of the USSR voted in a national referendum in favour of the Union. On December 8, 1991 three leaders (the presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia), without consulting anybody and with no popular mandate, declared the USSR non-existent.

Despite this declaration, to our own surprise as former Soviet citizens, we find ourselves in a territory in which the old Soviet frontiers are still protected by the very same border-guards. At least this former USSR institution is still intact. As a matter of fact, when I travelled to SA it was on a USSR passport issued as recently as August 1993!

More significantly, the territory of the former Soviet Union still remains deeply integrated economically. There remain very strong historic ties between various republics and innumerable human links between individuals and families artificially separated by the "independence" wave. Sometimes these new entities strikingly resemble the "independent bantustan states" in South Africa.

There are very strong tendencies in Russia and other republics towards reintegration. The general

economic crisis, caused to a large degree by the split, is making it very clear for the people that we either die separately or survive and recover together. Most of the republics make it quite clear that they are prepared to reintegrate at any moment.

## Socialism

It seems to have been unquestionably accepted in the past three to four years that "communism is dead", especially as this kind of assertion was coming from the Kremlin itself. But how then do you explain that:

- the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) is by far the biggest political party in the country (with over half a million members). It is the only party which has well developed local, regional and national structures;
- the general elections on December 12, 1993 would certainly have given the CPRF a majority in parliament were it not for the "Zhirinovsky factor" — the use of a classic demagogue who was given unlimited TV time during the pre-election campaign to snatch votes from the genuine nationalist/patriotic and left forces, and to discredit internationally these forces. Notwithstanding this, the CPRF obtained 13% of the vote, the ruling party obtained 14%;
- the relative strength of the party is reflected in the fact that the Speaker of the lower Chamber of the Russian Parliament is a Communist;
- the massive propaganda effort to destroy the image of Lenin and then to destroy his body in the Mausoleum failed;
- the leader of the CPRF, Gennady Zhuganov is one of the most popular and respected politicians in the country.

Similar trends are observed in other republics, especially in Byelorussia and Ukraine, where the communists are the biggest fractions in the respective parliaments.

These are just examples to underline that the "collapse of communism" cliche is a generalisation whose assumptions are certainly far too sweeping. One has to look beyond the propaganda assertions on both sides, at the more fundamental issues to determine what is the reality.

It should be admitted that large parts of the political superstructure of the state have fallen into the hands of anti-communist (most of them former communist) elements. But it is well known that change in the political superstructure does not automatically lead to a change in the economic base and thus to a change in the socio-economic nature of the society. (This applies as much to Russia as to the new SA.)

The fact of the matter is that the state, with all the "privatisation" rhetoric, retains "the commanding heights" of the economy. So-called "private business" is concentrated predominantly in wholesale and retail speculation, selling and reselling goods produced by the state-owned enterprises. It is also concentrated in commercial banking, making money out of money. "Private business"

hardly holds any significant positions in the productive spheres of the economy.

Despite all the "free market" rhetoric, most of the people live in conditions of what we used to call "developed socialism", albeit now in a deteriorating situation — free education, free medical care, fairly cheap housing and relatively efficient public transport. The overwhelming majority of people have decent flats, jobs, durables (TVs, fridges, etc.), stockpiles of clothes. Very many have cars and country houses. (All this was acquired of course under the "tyranny" of the former Communist regime). Wages, although rapidly diminishing, are still sufficient to buy food. This enables people to sit and wait for the "bright capitalist future" to materialise.

But it seems that it is not forthcoming. Even leading Western politicians are openly admitting that. It seems the West is not only increasingly losing the ability to control developments in Russia/USSR, but even to understand what is happening here. What is the immediate future?

## Current political situation

To assess this it is necessary to look at the position of the main social forces.

The peasantry is extremely unhappy with the enormous and growing disparity between prices for industrial and agricultural goods. There is a strong feeling that the reforms are carried out at the expense of the rural areas. The peasants have not been paid for last year's harvest. They are deprived of traditional state subsidies and are left to compete with the heavily subsidised Western farmers. Collective farms (even economically viable ones) are being destroyed administratively for the ideological purpose of creating private farming (which is doomed to failure because of the complete lack of private farming infrastructure). All recent referendums and elections have shown the strong opposition of the peasantry to the current government.

Those sections of the working class providing vital infrastructural services (transport, electricity, municipal services) or working in the raw material export-oriented industries (mining, petrol, gas, etc.) are relatively well paid (though less than prior to 1990). They form at least a passive base of support for the current government, though even they are dissatisfied with the three to four months delay in the payment of wages and the constant risk of closures as a result of the general chaos. Workers in the hi-tech, especially defence industries, frequently face closures as a result of the government policies and are living on starvation wages.

Intellectuals who spearheaded the "perestroika" and "reform" campaigns (some sincerely, but many hoping to immediately attain the middle-class lifestyles of their Western counterparts) are the strongest affected. The current government is visibly reluctant to support education, culture and sciences,




and a majority of intellectuals are living now below the poverty line.

The state bureaucracy is basically well cared for by the government, but the patriotic forces in it (especially in the army, security and law-enforcement agencies) are very critical of the destruction of the country and can hardly be considered a reliable base of support for the current regime. The managers of the major state-owned companies are very unhappy with the general chaos in the economy and are at least indirectly opposed to the regime.

The only happy ones are the private business-people, involved in retail and whole-sale trade and com-

mercial banking, and the social groups servicing them (in total around 10-15% of the population). Those who are trying to develop productive business are very dissatisfied with government taxation policy and general economic and political instability.

People are increasingly identifying the root cause of the problems as lying in the destruction of the Soviet Union and in the loss of state control over the economy. Certainly, state control should not be as tight as in the past, which made our economy inflexible and unresponsive to technological innovations. But there is a general recognition that this is a particular type of economy and introduction of market elements should take decades.

There is thus very strong general dissatisfaction in our society, with the growing prospect of further social explosions. The dissatisfaction lies behind the rising influence of the opposition patriotic and left-wing forces. In an effort to combat this tendency and to discredit the opposition in the eyes of the world community, there is a strong attempt by the Russian pro-government press and the international mass media to create a picture of a growing threat of fascism in Russia. The reckless statements and extravagant behaviour of Zhirinovsky are receiving immediate and world-wide publicity. The fact of the matter is that Zhirinovsky has nothing to do with the genuine patriotic and left-wing forces in Russia/USSR who hold firm to their traditional internationalist positions.

There has been no major social unrest in Russia so far, partly because people are still cushioned to some extent by the welfare net, and partly because of a lack of political experience among the majority of the population. However the worsening economic situation can change all this fairly quickly. The regime is relying mainly on the support of the mass-media, especially the TV which is the main weapon of its survival.

## International dimension

It would be wrong to perceive Russia as a colony or a semi-colony. Even the slightest changes (for example the Russian vote at the UN Security Council on Yugoslavia), in the thus far totally pro-Western positions of the Russian ruling group, have an immediate and strong impact, indicating that Russia remains an important factor in the global balance of forces.

It should be recalled that the superpower status of the USSR was always based not so much on its economic but on its military might. Notwithstanding the disruption caused by the "reforms" to the conventional forces, the nuclear deterrent (ground-based, submarine-based and air-borne strategic missiles) remains in place.

The tendency towards more independent foreign policy will grow stronger as a result of powerful pressures from the opposition patriotic and left-wing forces, and as a result of the frustration of the ruling elite due to the inability of the West to




**"So where were you when everything was being privatised?"**

provide financial backing for the unpopular "reforms".

What is lacking in Russia now is a clear understanding of national interests and (especially) the political will to defend these interests. There is a growing consensus, that includes the ruling elite (which is compelled now to play the card of "patriotism"), that a supine pro-Western foreign policy cannot continue.

There is also a growing recognition that the Cold War is far from being over, in the sense that the West is not really pursuing the "destruction of communism" so much as the destruction of Russia/USSR. There is consensus on this between such formerly utterly incompatible forces as the communists and the anti-communist dissidents, who were in exile but who are now openly prepared to cooperate with the communists to prevent the destruction of Russia.

It is clear now that the West is not omnipotent (its military failure in Somalia makes it quite evident). Its economic might is equally questionable. The "reforms" in Russia/USSR were largely based on the Western promises to provide at least US$24 for the modernisation of the economy. As much as the West would like to save its strategic allies in Russia,

these billions failed to arrive, precipitating the political crisis.

With the ideological smokescreen around East-West conflict removed, Russia/USSR is experiencing all the problems (especially unequal economic exchange) of the "new world order" familiar to countries in the South. There is a vast potential for cooperation between the countries of the developing South and the developing North (Eastern Europe and Russia/USSR).

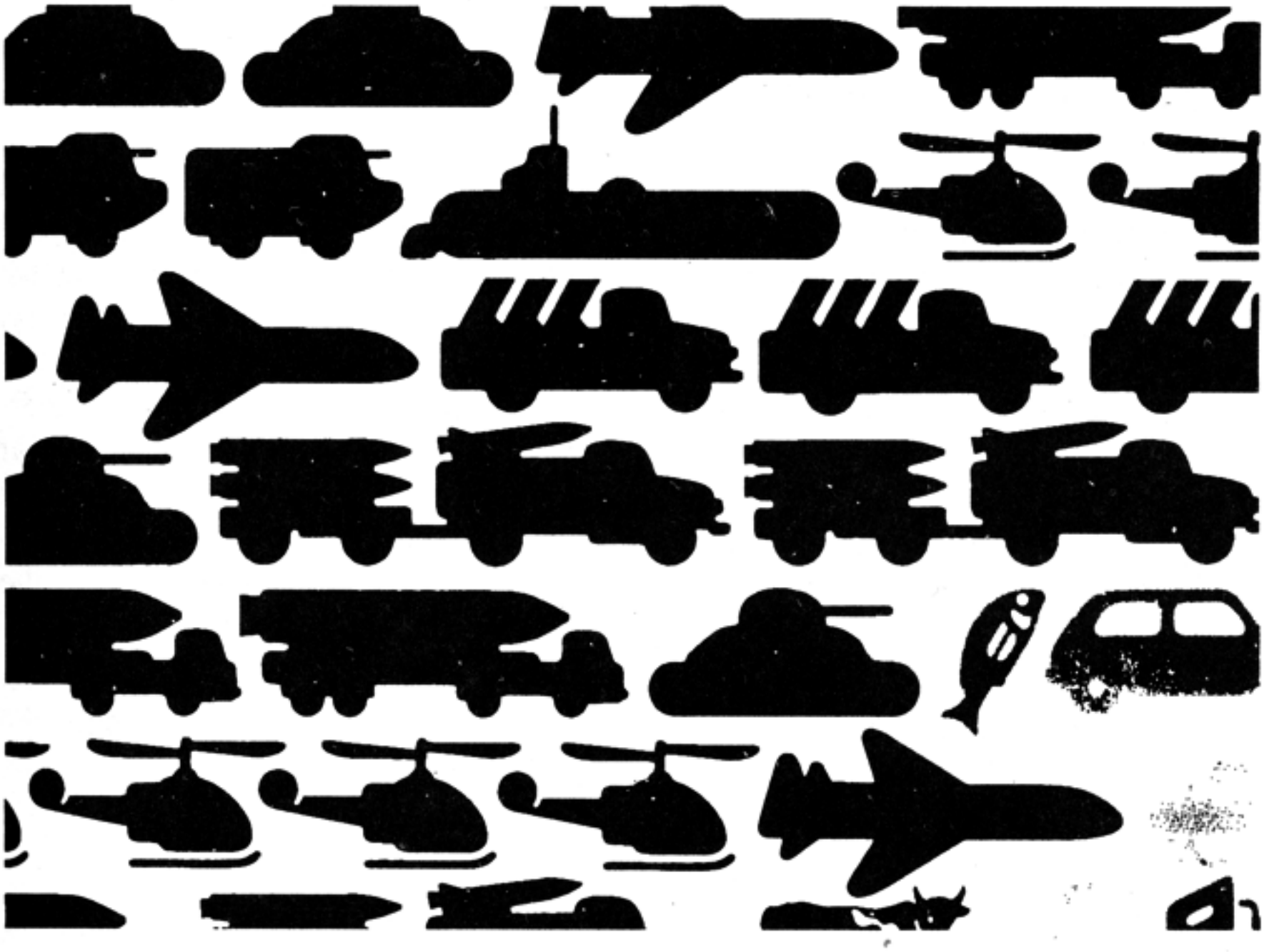
## Conclusions

Russia/USSR is gravely sick, but it is far from being dead. It is gradually overcoming the "infantile disease of rightism", and is fully determined to take its proper historic place in the world community of nations.

It is clear today that the current cooling of relations between our two countries and peoples was a result of a deliberate and carefully calculated design to destroy these decades-long relations and to prevent the establishment of close economic, political and other ties between the new South Africa and Russia/USSR. This attempt has partially succeeded, creating negative, or at least indifferent attitudes in SA towards our country.

But would it be wise for the new SA to base its approach to global issues on the assumption that one-sixth of the territory of the globe (Russia/USSR) is just a blank spot on the map?

***Dmitri Andreev***
***Moscow***



# War and resistance

*War and Resistance: Southern African Reports — The Struggle for Southern Africa* as documented by *Resister* magazine.
Gavin Cawthra, Gerald Kraak and Gerald O'Sullivan (eds.),
Macmillan Press, London and Basingstoke, 1994.

Much has been written about the war waged in South Africa and the sub-continent by successive apartheid governments. Very few books or articles, however, capture the true extent of the war that was waged in this region, the brutality and sheer messiness of the attempts by the NP to maintain political power and prohibit the majority of people in SA and Namibia, as well as the rest of the sub-continent, from exercising their democratic rights.

*Resister*, a journal run on a shoestring budget in the 1980s by the London-based Committee on South African War Resistance (COSAWR), was an exception. As readers of the book will find, articles that appeared

in *Resister* over the years ranged from those that looked at the moral arguments for resisting the SADF, to those that discussed the strategy and tactics of the guerrilla armies opposing the apartheid regime. Accounts by conscripts told of the horrors of the occupation of Namibia, and analysis of statements by the SADF generals gave an insight into military strategy of the regime itself.

The book, a fairly broad and balanced selection of articles, captures well the spirit of *Resister*. The contributions dealing with individual experiences of war resisters are particularly uplifting, testifying to the capacity of people to choose the morally correct path, even under duress or while subjected to propaganda of an authoritarian regime. But, and this was the tradition of COSAWR (and of the internally based End Conscription Campaign), the book always sees resistance to apartheid war as an issue that was broader than conscripts alone, and affecting all South Africans.

The single most important strength of the book is the self-critical approach followed by the editors. They frankly deal with the problems and tensions of the war resistance movement. Politically, there was always a tension between mobilising white conscripts on the necessity of resisting an unjust war on the one hand, and moving to the next step, actively defending people against such aggression, between pacificism and a justified armed resistance.

But this collection is not just about the recent past. We are now inheriting the effects of the massive militarisation of our society. Apartheid has left an entire military-industrial complex, wielding enormous power and influence in our country. *Resister* often went beyond the military itself, and covered aspects of policing, death-squads, the right-wing, vigilantes and the intelligence structures. From our side, too, the national liberation movements developed substantial military wings. Although, being a collection of articles, the book cannot explore this theme in depth, the book serves to raise the question of militarisation in the broadest sense. An emergent democratic state such as ours needs to carefully weigh up the need for, and the role of, the military establishment in a democracy. Perhaps the issues of militarisation, of resistance to war, of the moral arguments for and against war in general which were raised by the South African anti-conscription movement, can now be dealt with in an environment which will allow for wider participation. This book is a contribution to that task. ★

***Phillip Dexter***

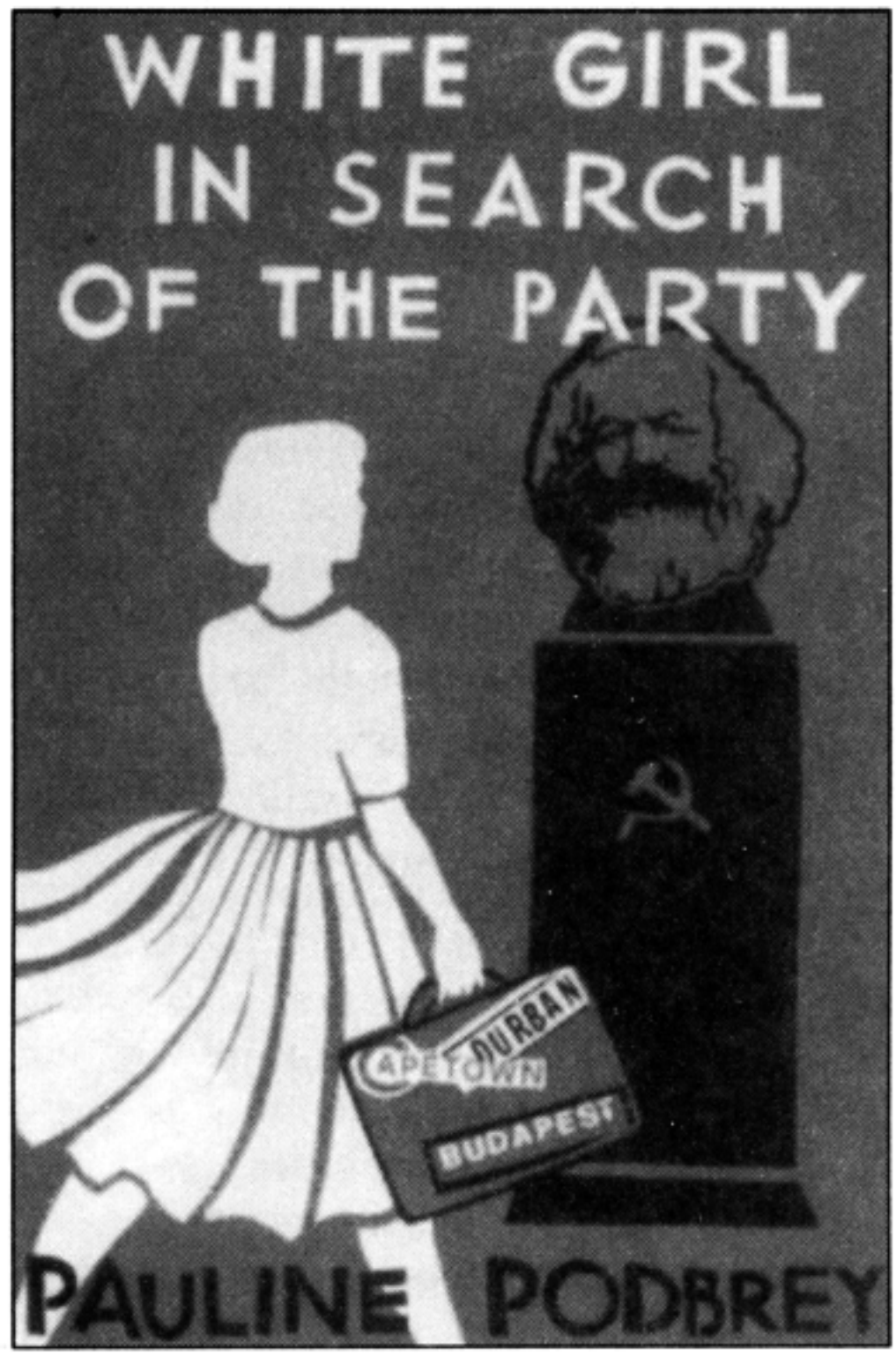
# An autobiography

*White girl in Search of the Party*,

by Pauline Podbrey (Hadeda Books, University of Natal Press).

Pauline Podbrey was born in Lithuania and came to South Africa as a child. She was following the path trodden by many Jewish families — first, father leaves home to escape a combination of unemployment and persecution and scouts out the new homeland of his choice; then mother and the children follow in his wake, a few years later. There follows the struggle to make a new life, to adapt to a new culture. Most of the parents, even those who were financially successful, remained outsiders for the rest of their days. Most children became integrated in the new society very quickly.

Pauline Podbrey's autobiography begins in February 1933 when she, her mother and brother Joe arrived in Durban aboard the SS Watussi to join father Podbrey who had come to South Africa four years previously to start a new life. As a child in Lithuania she had only once seen a black man who was part of a travelling circus and stirred amazement and amusement among the children of the shtetl who followed him wherever he went. On board ship she had been told by a friendly nun about the injustices meted out to Africans by the whites in South Africa. "Do you know", the nun confided to her in a whisper, "when a white man wants to reach for something, he makes a black man kneel down and then steps on his back?"




In Durban harbour, Pauline, all of nine years old, searched for kneeling blacks with white men on their backs. "There weren't any but I did see black men straining under heavy sacks while white florid men in big hats lounged about, smoking

and talking, making no effort to help the ones who were doing all the work". No one seemed to find it remarkable.

It was hatred of racial oppression which led Pauline into the trade union movement and finally the Communist Party. The title of her book White Girl in Search of the Party is misleading, bearing an implication that in fact she never found it. But in fact she was very happy in the South African Communist Party. In her postscript, after declaring her disillusion with communism, she admits: "The theory was fine, the words were inspiring. `From each according to his ability, to each according to his need'. What finer aim had humanity ever evolved? Nor did I regret the years of my life devoted to the cause in South Africa, the trade union work, the struggle against race discrimination. That was a part of my life I could be proud of - the South African Communist Party was the only organisation which stood for total equality — and I would do the same again".

The fight against racism became even more central in her life when she married trade union and Communist Party leader HA Naidoo. Owing to the opposition of her parents, she was unable to marry HA in Durban, and even when HA was transferred to Cape Town to serve on the central committee of the Party it took some time before they could find a marriage official to unite them. But their stay in Cape Town was limited. As an Indian, HA was prohibited from living in Cape Town without a permit, and after some years the police caught up with him. In 1951, unable to make a home either in Cape Town or Durban, they decided, with Party consent, to emigrate to England. After a few months unsettled existence in London, they were offered the job of broadcasting in English over Budapest radio in Hungary, and accepted with alacrity.

"The thought of living and working in a socialist country excited and thrilled us! In our dreams we'd never hoped for such a privilege. To experience at first hand the struggles and achievements of building socialism, to share in the life of a people engaged in this historic task, to be part of their movement to create a workers' paradise; it all seemed to us to be too good to be true."

For three and a half years, from 1952 to 1955, Pauline and HA worked on Budapest radio, but their early hopes were not realised. Pauline describes in detail the process of their disillusionment in the face of the "corruption, the cynicism, the opportunism" they experienced all around them. The bureaucracy was all-pervading.

Yet one cannot avoid the feeling that in this chapter of her autobiography Pauline is writing to justify herself and that her picture of life in Hungary is overdrawn, too totally negative. Granted the incidents and experiences she describes undoubtedly happened to her. But was there nothing good in Hungarian life? Certainly not one positive feature is recorded.

One asks oneself whether

Pauline's memory of her stay in Budapest has perhaps been over-coloured by the later events of 1956 and the hullabaloo that surrounded the "Russian invasion", the execution of Nagy and all the surrounding events. I raise this query because in 1954, when my wife Sonia and I spent a week in Budapest in the company of Pauline and HA, the picture they painted was quite different. True, they had their grumbles about this and that instance of bureaucratic stupidity or insensitivity, many of them precisely of the type she describes in her book. But their approach was otherwise wholly positive. I remember HA expressing appreciation of the political leadership provided by the Hungarian party and the political education he himself had received.

In her autobiography Pauline writes; "Life under a Communist regime had opened my eyes to the evils inherent in such a system. More than that, it had made me question the theory underlying the system and to wonder whether it did not inevitably lead to corruption, inefficiency and suppression." Yet in the very next paragraph she proclaims her faith in "the virtues of socialism and democracy" and her determination to "keep on trying" to be true to her principles. Nowhere in her book, however, does she discuss the theories of either socialism or communism, or their inherent virtues or evils.

In my view the one-sidedness of the chapter on Budapest, 36 pages out of a total of 204, mars an otherwise thoroughly enjoyable autobiogrphy, "lively, funny and outspoken", as the blurb describes it. It recreates effectively the atmosphere of her days in South Africa, with interesting flashbacks to her childhood in Lithuania, and is noteworthy for the succession of revealing and frank profiles of the wide variety of personalities, from Issy Diamond to Palme Dutt with whom she came into contact. Pauline is a warm-hearted and generous personality, devoid of malice, and her account of her life adds up to a pleasant and insightful read. ★

– ***Brian Bunting***

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